

ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL COLORATION ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION BY AFRICAN CHRISTIAN LEADERS: A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN JOS, NIGERIA

by

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The issue of cultural influence in conflict resolution is highly significant. Understanding cultural coloration will not only enhance the process of conflict resolution, it will in addition enable ministers and leaders, as third parties to a conflict to be intentionally biblical in contextualizing their conflict resolution processes.

This research examines how African cultural values influence African Christian Leaders and how prevalent African cultural values color the approach of African Christian leaders in the processes of conflict resolution. The result of female participants was compared with that of male participants to discover possible variance in cultural coloration between African Christian female leaders and African Christian male leaders.

Generally, the cultural values of the value of respect for elders; the value for community life; the value for harmonious relationships; the value for the weak, the sick, and elderly; and the value for land come out as prevalent cultural values. Cultural coloration takes place intentionally, unconsciously, and spontaneously with intentional coloration ranking highest and spontaneous coloration ranking lowest.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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by

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

Gbenga and Shade¹ were married according to both traditional and church rites. For a few reasons, their marriage ended in a divorce after about 1 ½ years with Shade nursing their baby boy. Both of them left the church where they wedded. Gbenga believed the pastor did not handle the matter well, and Shade wanted a new environment to continue with her life. Over the course of time, they began to see each other again, first occasionally and then more regularly. Subsequently, Gbenga fell sick and for days could not come out of his house, where he was living alone. He was so weak that he could not even open the door for himself. When his godmother noticed that the door was locked from the inside and did not hear his voice, she had the door forced open only to discover that he had been sick and was dying. The godmother contacted Shade and she came to nurse him back to health. Her nursing him renewed their affection for each other and after about seven years of divorce, they both agreed to come back together again. Shade went to the pastor who had married them to inform him of their situation, and he suggested to her that before moving in, Gbenga should pay another dowry to her parents for remarrying her. Gbenga, who already did not trust the pastor, did not like his advice. Eventually, they moved in together. Shade went back to their former church and Gbenga moved to another church where his marital history was not known. He insisted that his wife come with him, but she was getting involved with their former church. Readjusting back to family life was not easy for both of them, but they did not seek help. One of the

¹ All the stories used as illustration in this project are true stories, but the real names of the parties were changed.

parties did not trust the pastor who knew their marital history and who could have been of help. As of this date (1 September 2008), Shade was in the process of moving out of the marriage again. The pastor still thought that until Gbenga pays another dowry, the couple should regard themselves as living in adultery, and Gbenga is still not willing to talk about the situation to yet another pastor. The question is whether cultural considerations or biblical considerations heavily influenced the pastor's mediation and verdict.

Problem of the Study

Individuals make up every community in the image and likeness of God but with different temperaments, gifts/talents, and the ability to see the same thing from different perspectives. Blending these differences and the shades of opinion that they produce are the seedbed of progress in the community. Somehow, these same things contain the seed for differences that can degenerate into sometimes very unpleasant situations that can be a threat or a blessing to community. As long as people have harmony of opinion and goals, things run smoothly and they are happy, but when differences are magnified beyond particular limits, then disagreement, confusion, and even conflicts results. Such conflicts can become counterproductive to the existence of the community. The question that immediately comes to mind is whether people can live together without conflict, even when they disagree. One must have a general understanding of the kind of situation that creates the atmosphere for conflict in order to address this issue.

Writing on conflict, Jim Van Yperen observes that it seems to arise out of crises and usually presents early warning signs that were either missed or addressed superficially only to have them develop into new sets of problems later (255). "Conflict occurs when two opposing parties have interest or goals that appear to be incompatible"

(Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy 486). The opposing parties could be a couple, members of the same or different societies, they could also be two different nations.

In addition, Craig Van Gelder notes that the character of communal activity involves the complexities of different values, biases, interpretations, and power dynamics among members or groups within a congregation, and such complexities often involve conflict (108). The dynamics of living and working together with other people or groups usually generate conflict. The complexity of these dynamics leads to the question of whether avoiding conflict is possible or not.

Richard L. Hughes, Robert C. Ginnett, and Gordon J. Curphy say that conflict “is an inevitable fact of life and an inevitable fact of leadership” (486). Van Yperen underscores the inevitability of conflict:

If death and taxes are the first two certainties of life, conflict is the third. Life requires conflict. It is the essential part of God’s redeeming plan. Through conflict we know our need, acknowledge sin, recognize truth and test our faith. (241)

Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey comment on the inevitability of conflict:

One cannot have community without conflict. This is as true in the church as in any area of life. In some respects, the potential for conflict is even greater in the church than elsewhere. This is due to the diversity of the constituencies that make up many congregations, the fact that the church is not selective but welcomes all comers, and the fact that the matters of faith and life with which the church deals represent deeply held convictions. (112)

In line with what these writers say, Michael R. Tucker also remarks, “Conflict is normal. Expect it. But learn to handle it properly” (93). He also says, “[I]n the church we cannot avoid conflict, and we should not want to. It has advantages” (98). I agree with these writers that conflict is normal and inevitable in any community.

Everyone has to face conflict as a part of the necessary outcome of living in the world together with other people. Whether on a larger or smaller scale, conflict is unavoidable. This fact is a reality with which everyone must come to terms and with which everyone has to learn to live. Conflict is not always bad as it can serve to teach and to change people with respect to how they perceive others, their world, their work, and even themselves. However, people cannot afford to live with the ugly side of conflict.. If people are to avoid the ugly side of conflict as much as possible, then conflict should be resolved whenever it arises.

Part of the responsibility of leaders is to help people resolve and clear up the sometime dreadful effects of conflicts, but then leaders do not grow up or develop in a vacuum. Their background has impact on how they help people resolve conflicts. With particular reference to the African situation, the key influences that make up the shaping of a leader are African traditional leadership, religion, and colonial influences (Janvier and Thaba 12-23). In a multicultural community of faith, the core values of common faith is the primary basis for coexistence and, hence, the connection of the peoples. Having common values does not mean that people lost all of their cultural peculiarities and particularities to the community. Cultural peculiarities and particularities are sometimes the underlying cause of conflict in the community of faith; however, when conflict arises, people do not always remember the bond of faith or their culture. I have observed that writings on conflict resolution have the tendency to focus on the perspective of the people in conflict and not on the leaders on whose shoulders rest the responsibility of resolving the conflict. Nevertheless, the judgment of the leaders is crucial to resolution and reconciliation in a multicultural setting and more especially in a global world. The impact

of culture on how Christian leaders approach conflict resolution was the focus of this study.

My observations fit with the opinion of Wayne Kassera (93-95). He observes that most leaders see and understand conflict first from the perspective of their own worldview before (that is if at all) seeing it from the perspective of the people in conflict. The problem with this way of viewing conflict is that elements of their culture to which they are often blind usually interfere with the biblical principles they will claim to be upholding in their approach to conflict resolution and reconciliation, the consequence of which is a culture-colored approach to conflict resolution. The issue, then, is how to handle conflict so that its ugly side will not remain with everyone involved. In order to discover how to handle conflict more biblically, mediators need to know the influences that shape or that should shape the handling of conflicts. Knowing the extent to which cultural influences interact with the Bible is also crucial to clearing the effect of conflicts. Equally important is discovering how Christian leaders can be more biblical in their approach to conflict resolution. These are among the issues for which this research sought to find answers. The research examined and described how cultural values color the participants' approach to conflict mediation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to describe the phenomenon of cultural coloration and its influence on African Christian leaders in Jos, Nigeria, and the resulting impact on conflict resolution.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this project, the following research questions guided the inquiry.

Research Question #1

What elements of cultural coloration interfere with or affect biblical principles in the process of conflict resolution?

Research Question #2

How do the cultural coloration elements affect the approach of leaders to conflict resolution?

The aim of the first research question is to discover elements of culture that have the potential to color the approach of mediators in handling conflict. The second research question helped discover how those cultural elements color the approach of mediators and interfere with biblical principles of conflict resolution.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are essential for understanding the discussion in this project.

For the purpose of this research, a *Christian leader* is any believer with an evangelical conviction who is in a supervisory leadership role in a church or Christian ministry. Christian leaders include but are not limited to pastors, church/denominational executives, seminary teachers, and fellowship leaders.

Conflict is the struggle for supremacy that arises because of differences and interferences in the respective values and goals of people connected relationally, leading usually to disharmony, and generally operating at different levels. The definition views

conflict in the broadest sense and covers the what, why, and who of the issue, as well as the result and levels of conflict.

Culture is “the body of knowledge shared by the members of a group. That knowledge takes the form of rules which governs the way in which individuals relate to and interpret their environment” (Hesselgrave and Rommen 158). Culture provides a member of a society the tools with which to make meaning out of what is taking place around him or her.

Cultural coloration is the subjective influence of some elements of cultural belief or behavior to which a person is usually blind but that are capable of intervening in the person’s approach to conflict resolution. Such intervention may be positive or negative.²

Conflict resolution is the process of settling conflict such that the parties in conflict will not only cease hostility but will be willing to forgive each other and relate.

For the purpose of this project, I used conflict resolution and conflict mediation interchangeably because whether the parties in conflict work together to end and resolve the matter or a third party intervenes to bring about resolution (Matt. 18:15-16), the conflict is resolved.

Context of Study

The research took place among Christian leaders in Jos, a cosmopolitan city in the central part of Nigeria. The variety of denominations and Christian ministries with headquarters in Jos coupled with the typical cultural mix of a growing urban city enriched and gave depth to the study. The research included men and women serving in leadership.

² The definition of cultural coloration is based on the writing of Gregario Billikopf. He says, “Blind spots prevent us from seeing our own faults. We do not always see how our actions may be contributing to our difficulties. As long as blind spots exist, we tend to blame everyone but ourselves for our predicaments” (29).

Because the Christian community of Jos and the culture mix of the city is a fair representation of the larger Christian community in the northern part of the country, the result of the research is relevant to those who are serving as leaders in that part of the country. The end goal was to develop a model of conflict resolution that is more biblical than cultural; therefore, the result of the research is beneficial in the global context.

Methodology

This section gives a brief description of the various components of the methodology used for the research.

Project Description

The project, which used mixed method research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie; Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, and Rupert; Sandelowski), was a phenomenological study seeking to determine the elements of cultural coloration that usually impact the application of biblical principles by Christian leaders in the process of conflict resolution. It also sought how these elements hindered conflict resolution with a view of suggesting skills that make Christian leaders more biblical in their approach to conflict resolution. The research used stratified random samples of people represented within the Christian community and sequential mixed methods for data collection (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, and Rupert 21). The first sequence used an attitude scale designed to find out how participants perceived the impact of the various cultural values on their approach to life in general. The use of the attitude scale enabled the determination of which cultural values to examine in detail relative to how such cultural values color participants' approaches to conflict resolution. Upon identifying a particular cultural value as having the highest potential to color the approach to conflict resolution, participants responded to an open-

ended questionnaire to determine their perception and approaches to conflict resolution in light of the particular cultural element. The questionnaires also discovered what Christian leaders require in terms of knowledge and skills to enable them to be more biblical in the process of conflict resolution. The research questions guided the questionnaire.

I carefully analyzed the results of both the questionnaires and the interviews and used these findings to describe how conflict resolution could be more biblical in light of cultural coloration. The geographical focus of the project was Jos, a city in the central part of Nigeria. Within six months, the study was completed.

Participants

The number of denominations in Jos is about 135, and the number of parachurch organizations is about sixty-five, the majority of which are multicultural in their membership makeup. I used the sum of the number of denominations and parachurch organizations as the population for the study. These organizations have both male and female leaders from various tribes and cultures. The selected participants were male and female Christian leaders, chosen from a cross section of the Christian community in Jos.

The number of participants included twenty-two people (men and women) representing about 10 percent of the target population. Each of them was not less than 35 years of age and came from the three major tribes in Nigeria: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, respectively. The fact that they are the major tribes of Nigeria and their languages are generally spoken and even used for Christian worship informed their choice. The cultural particularities of these languages will not only make the research findings cross-cultural in orientation but will also give the findings a more transferable application in similar settings.

The participants chosen by a stratified random sample of the target population comprise fifteen men and seven women spread equally among the tribes. The reason for choosing more men was that African society has more men in leadership positions than women, which invariably puts men in position to be involved in conflict mediation at a higher frequency than women leaders. Each participant had a minimum of five years experience in leadership roles. The stratum used for selecting participants was along gender line. The study used the overall population of the churches and nonchurch organizations in the city as the pool from which the participants were drawn. From observation of the pattern of leadership and as a Christian leader in the city, I used an intuitive ratio of 30 percent women to 70 percent men to determine the sample.

Instrumentation

I used a five-point Likert scale for delineating cultural values and a semi-structured interview protocol for collecting descriptive data. The research used a mixed-method approach in designing the instruments with the Likert scale representing the quantitative element and a questionnaire guide representing the qualitative part of the instruments. I designed both to explore elements of cultural background that respondents cannot do without: their cultural principle of resolving conflict, their understanding of key biblical principles of conflict resolution, and their application of these biblical principles in the process of conflict resolution. I collated and analyzed the result to discover how the identified cultural elements influence their approach to conflict resolution.

Variables

The variables that may have affected the outcome of the study include gender that is whether males and females from the same culture approach conflict resolution in the same way or not. Another variable is the biological age of the respondents. The number of years since the respondent has been a believer and has been serving in leadership may also be an additional variable as is the kind of training an individual has had. The reason is that both training and level of Christian maturity may have expectedly influenced the individual's perception of conflict and approach to conflict resolution.

Data Collection

Data collection was interactive (Wiersma and Jurs 204; Hancock 9) and done through interviews on a one-on-one basis using an audiotape recorder. I prepared the questions using a semi-structured protocol, which is a series of open-ended questions (Seidman 70; Hancock 9) designed to allow the respondent to describe, in his or her own words, how personal cultural biases sneak into and interferes with the process of conflict resolution. I developed the interview questions only after identifying (through a thorough review of relevant literature) cultural components that are capable of intervening in the conflict resolution process. I recorded the interview with an Olympus WS- 331M digital voice recorder. A paid secretary transcribed the recorded interviews first into notebooks that were then stored in digital form using Microsoft Office Word 2003 and kept organizationally and by topic according to the identified factors.

Delimitations and Generalizability

The leaders cut across denominational lines from the major tribes of Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, respectively. The fact that they are the major tribes of Nigeria and their

languages are generally spoken and even used for Christian worship informed my choice of the tribes.³ The cultural particularities of these languages will not only make the research findings cross-cultural in orientation, but I hope they will give the findings transferable application in similar settings.

Biblical and Theological Foundation

In this section, I developed a biblical and theological foundation for understanding and resolving culture-colored conflict using Acts 15 as a case study. I precede the case with a brief overview of what the Bible says about leadership and culture

Leadership and Culture in the Bible

In developing a theological framework for the research, one must seek scriptural evidence to show that leaders' culture has any impact on the way they perceive and carry out their leadership functions. Following such inquiry is the question of whether Scripture shows that culture affects how leaders view and attempt to resolve conflict.

The call of Abraham out of his people to be the father of a new nation also birthed a new culture, the impact of which eventually ran through the history of the people of God. The ceremonial laws and rituals about what to eat, what not to eat, how to dress, how not to dress, and so on later became the cultural distinctiveness of the Jewish race. This cultural distinctiveness is the background for the conflict between Mordecai and Haman. When other people who stood at the gate of the king were bowing down to salute Haman, Mordecai would not do so because culturally as a Jew, he should not bow down for any man (Esth. 3:1-4). A similar occasion that demonstrated such adherence to

³ Although the country has other tribes, Hausa is the dominant language in the north, Igbo in the east, and Yoruba in the southwest. They are also the three languages commonly used for liturgy.

cultural norms was the time Daniel and his other colleagues refused to eat the portion of the king's delicacies as recorded in Daniel chapter 1. They refused mainly because those foods were not culturally acceptable (Dan. 1:1-8). A casual reading of the Old Testament from this perspective may lead to the impression that God sanctioned this idea of cultural superiority in favor of the Jews. Indeed, some Jews see it as such. Culture impacted how Old Testament people and their leaders saw their calling and did their work. The discussion that follows delves more into how leaders in the Bible saw conflict and sought to resolve it.

Biblical and Theological Approach to Resolving Culture-Colored Conflicts

This section of the chapter takes a closer look at how a culture-colored conflict was resolved in the Bible with the aim of drawing from it biblical principles for mediating in and resolving similar conflict(s). Using Acts 15:1-22 as the passage for study, first the Bible recognizes the reality of conflict and the possibility of conflict resolution. Second, Acts 15 is part of the larger context of Luke, the author of the Gospel and Acts, respectively.

A survey of biblical data shows that the following words underscore the reality of conflict: strife (Gen. 13:7; Prov. 15:18; 30:33); quarrel (Mark 6:19; Col. 3:13); contention (Prov. 13:10; 22:10; Acts 15:39); disputation (Acts 15:2); controversy (Deut. 17:8; 21:5; 25:1); and, dissension (Acts 15:2; 23:7). The Bible also has references on the possible causes of conflict and on how to resolve conflict. For example, Proverbs 30:33 says, "For as pressing milk produces curds, and pressing the nose produces blood, so pressing anger produces strife" (NRSV). When pressed beyond limit, anger can lead to conflict. For the resolution of a dispute, Deuteronomy 19:16-17 says, "If a malicious witness comes

forward to accuse someone of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.” As much as these references established the scriptural reality of conflict and the possibility of conflict resolution, for the purpose of this dissertation, Acts 15:1-22 is the chosen biblical case study for this research. The study produced principles that should form a foundation for resolving similar conflict in multiple contexts.

The larger context of Lukan writing is the basis for understanding the case study from the book of Acts. In order to understand Luke in the proper context, understanding his historiography and his stated purpose are important. Also important is whether Luke and Acts are two volumes of the same narrative or whether each is a narrative on its own. This consideration is necessary for interpretive purpose because it will facilitate reading and understanding Luke on his own term as much as possible. I am aware that discussion about Luke’s authorship of Acts; the comparison of Luke-Acts; and the purpose of Acts are of academic interest among scholars of the New Testament, however the view I subscribed to here is the general evangelical consensus on the matter without joining the debate.

Luke was a Gentile whose historiography is typical of the Hellenistic writing of history that flourished during the Hellenistic period (ca. 300 BC-AD 200). Gordon Fee notes that such history was written to encourage, entertain, inform, moralize, and offer apologetics, all in addition to documenting records of the past. This observation is in line with the stated intention of Luke in the Gospel (Luke 1:1-4). Luke also linked Acts with the Gospel and invariably to the same intention (Acts 1:1). If the intent of the Gospel of Luke is the same with that of Acts, then Acts is a continuation of the story in the Gospel.

Joel B. Green is one of the strong advocates for the narrative unity of Luke-Acts. He notes, “[T]he narrative unity of Luke-Acts would presuppose that the whole could be examined as the unfolding of one continuous narrative cycle moving from anticipation to narrative possibilities to probabilities to actualities to consequences and serving one primary narrative aim.” I. Howard Marshall also holds the same view (18-19). The story, started in the Gospel of Luke, continues in Acts with a continual forward movement of the narrative plot from Jerusalem to Rome. Luke presents the Church as moving from its Jewish setting based in Jerusalem to the ends of the world in the Acts narrative. The leading figure of the predominantly Jewish church is Peter. As the Church moved towards a Church with a majority of Gentiles, Paul became the leading figure. Rome being, then, the capital of the Gentile world represented the end of the world to which the believers must bear witness of Jesus Christ and the blessings of salvation (Acts 1:8). The narrative unity of Luke-Acts flows through the various plot of the book of Acts. Reading and understanding both books in the light of each other and in the light of the greater purpose of Luke makes the idea of the unity of both books clearer.

The purpose of Luke was to tell the story of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ for all humankind, regardless of race or state in life (Luke 4:18-20). God prepared this story of salvation in the presence of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Israel, the people of God (Luke 2:30-32). Luke told how Jesus began and finished his part of the work in the Gospel and how the Holy Spirit working through the early believers spread (and will continue to spread) the impact of it to the ends of the world. In one sentence, the story of God’s purpose brings salvation in all of its fullness to all (Green and McKeever 62-63). The approach of Luke in providing continuity between

the work of Jesus and the work of the early Church was “to show how the church, composed of Jews and Gentiles, stands in continuity with Judaism” (Marshall 22).

Although a reader can glean several possible consequences of taking the message of salvation from Jerusalem to the ends of the world from reading the book of Acts, I want to focus on only one of them.

One of the consequences of the message of salvation moving from a predominantly Jewish setting to other settings (the world) is that it is also moving across a cultural divide. The movement of the gospel across a cultural divide gave rise to a situation in which some of the Jewish Christians who were used to seeing relationship with God only from their cultural perspective believed that people who would become Christians would also have to become cultural Jews. For these Jewish Christians, circumcision and keeping of the laws of Moses were conditions for acceptance into the community of faith. This conviction became the source of tension in the early Church such that members were culturally labeled first as Hebrews and Hellenists (Acts 6:1) and then later as Jews and Gentiles (Acts 13:42-14:1). A careful reading of Acts reveals that in arranging his narrative, Luke placed the Hebrews versus Hellenists conflict before the persecution that led to the spread of the gospel message among many more Hellenists (Acts 6:1-7; compare with 8:1, 4). By placing the Hebrews versus Hellenists conflict before the persecution of the early Church, Luke resolved the conflict before telling the story of the forward and accelerated movement of the message to many more Hellenists (see also Larkin 98; Longenecker 327). Luke placed the Jews-Gentiles conflict story resolved in Acts 15:1-33 before shifting the focus of his narrative to the spread of the gospel among predominantly Gentile settings. Luke was intentional in placing these two

passages on the issue of conflict because of cultural bias before telling of the spread of the gospel to other areas where the gospel encountered many more of the cultures. Before looking at the case study, I want to say that the narrative of Acts is more than just a story because it presents to the church historical precedents with normative values for teaching and preaching in the light of the cross-cultural reality of the nature and mandate of the church (Larkin 15-16; Marshall 50).

Acts 15:1-22—A Case Study

Below is the case study text in narrative form:

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, “My brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written,

‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago.’

Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues.”

Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers.

In this passage, Luke presented a pattern of culture-colored conflict development and its resolution as the gospel message met with a new culture. I want to show that as such conflict was resolved, the church experienced joy and progress.

The word *then* at the beginning of this pericope connects the passage to the ending part of chapter 14 and gives an immediate context for what happened. The story in the passage should begin from chapter 14 verse 28. Paul and Barnabas with other members of their team returned to Antioch, their missionary base (Acts 13:1-3). They came back with good report of what God had done through their mission and ministry in the places they had been. They would remain in Antioch for some time, telling their story repeatedly. The people who heard them were happy with the story of the conversion of the Gentiles; however, the question of cultural assimilation into the community of faith was an issue to certain individuals.

These individuals came down from Judea to Antioch, and they targeted the Gentile brothers and sisters with their brand of teaching that *unless* the brothers underwent circumcision according to the custom of Moses, they could not be saved. Luke

did not say who these individuals were. He did not say whether they were a group of people in the larger church or just a band of people who decided to raise issues about circumcision. However, any careful reader of the chapters preceding this passage and the passage itself will find direct insight or conjecture on who the individuals were and why they raised the issues they did.

I find few things from earlier chapters and from the text on the idea of who these certain individuals might be. Judea as a region seems to occupy an important place in the task of evangelization at these early stages of the church (Acts 1:8; 2:14; 8:1; 9:31; 10:37; 11:1). I suspect that *matured* believers were in the church at the time. Among the Jews who first became Christian were those who believed they were more Jewish and Christian than others. That kind of feeling was part of what led to the complaint of the Hellenists about the neglect of their widows (6:1). Another fact known before this time is that many priests had become obedient to the faith (6:7). The passage also indicates that in the church at Jerusalem were believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees (6:5). The views of these Pharisees corroborated the teaching of the people who came to Antioch from Judea. The picture of the church by this time is of a community comprised of mainly Jews and some Gentiles. Among the Jews were respected Pharisees who still kept the laws even though they had become believers. Luke also indicated the presence of some believing Jews who already constituted themselves to oppose the preaching and teaching of Paul and Barnabas (13:43-52).

For these Pharisees and those who embrace their teachings, Gentiles must first have the power or ability to be saved before conversion to faith in Christ. Salvation is a process that requires assimilation into the Jewish culture through circumcision in order to

have the power to be saved. Then the person can be converted and continue to keep the laws of Moses to assure salvation: “For them, circumcision was not simply an optional cultural form; it was a matter of religious life and death—the indispensable symbol of the covenant relationship” (Flemming 45), which could not be negotiated. Their concern was not whether Gentiles can come to faith in Christ or not, but that they must go through these processes before they would be regarded as being saved (Marshall 242). For these Judaizers salvation was a cultural issue with a theological overtone. Keeping the Laws of Moses was not the issue, as they did not insist that all believers should keep the law. They assumed that keeping the laws of Moses was normative for all Jews who had come to faith in Christ, so only the Gentiles needed to be told to do the same. The fact that they did not use the church as an example that what they were saying was true of every other person who had come to faith in Christ cast a shadow of doubt on their sincerity of purpose. One should not be surprised at this position because in Luke the Pharisees are a group of people who see things as right only from their own perspective (Luke 7:36-39; 11:37-38; 18:10-12). Therefore, I maintain that the issue is a cultural one clothed in theological garments. They were seeing their theology from a cultural perspective instead of seeing the culture from a theological perspective. Holding on to such a position actually challenges the universality of the message of salvation by faith and of Christianity (Lange 271).

Expectedly their perspective sparked off a conflict. I say expectedly because Christ nowhere made circumcision a basis for salvation. Jesus consistently taught that salvation comes by faith (Luke 7:50; 8:50; 18:42; Acts 2:21). For Luke as a person and as a member of the team that went on the mission that led to the conversion of these

Gentiles, they were already believers and fellow brothers with all who shared in the common faith (Acts 15:1, 5). The debate became contentious. Whether Paul and Barnabas really wanted the issue resolved at that local level or whether they deliberately forced the conflict to a standstill so the issue would not be resolved immediately only to resurface another time, is not clear.

If the intention of Paul and Barnabas was to take the matter beyond Antioch, which I suspect it was, then they succeeded. They succeeded because the issue at stake is a misunderstanding of the meaning of salvation. If the wrong perspective of the people who came from Judea prevailed, then salvation would come by works of the law and not by faith in the finished work of Christ.

The perspective of the brothers that came to faith from the sect of the Pharisees had not changed from that of Jews being the chosen people of God and Judaism being the way to worship God. For these Jews, Judaism was the only way for integration into the community of faith. Anyone could be converted they argued, but conversion did not mean belonging to the community of faith until/except/unless the person was circumcised. When issues of cultural perspectives wear theological garments, they are usually difficult to resolve. Although the believing Judaizers were right to insist that becoming fully integrated into the community of faith involves a process, the process they chose was wrong. The deadlock led to the sending of a delegation to Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas. The passage is however, not clear whether the individuals from Judea followed them to Jerusalem or not. The possibility is that those individuals knew that some people in the church at Jerusalem shared their view. If so, then their going to Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas would not matter. Even if members of the sect in

Jerusalem would support them, these certain individuals forgot that the plan of the mission of God was to the ends of the earth (1:8) without the condition of circumcision attached. Moreover, a precedent for accepting Gentiles as saved members of the community of faith without the condition of circumcision had in some way been set when uncircumcised Cornelius was accepted as belonging to the community of faith by the Church and presumably by the council in Jerusalem (see 11:18).

On the way to Jerusalem, the delegate was not so much concerned about the controversy but about the good news of the conversion of Gentiles, which brought great joy to the believers. This approach is a lesson to the effect that to be agents of transmitting heartwarming news is better than creating controversies and conflicts because of cultural issues.

In verses 4 and 5, the Jerusalem assembly seems to have a simple structure from the way Luke wrote verse four. The Church had what I call the general assembly, which Luke referred to as the church, the apostles, and then the elders. The assembly that received the report included the apostles and the elders. They declared all that God had done with them (*anēngeilan te hosa ho theos epoiēsen met' autōn*) and not the dissension and debate that took place at Antioch. Apparently it was on the basis of the report they presented that the believers of the sect of the Pharisees stood up to raise the issue of circumcision and the need to keep the law of Moses (v. 5). Although the Pharisees in the Jerusalem church corroborated the issue of circumcision raised by the people from Judea, the two groups did not agree on how circumcision affects salvation. The people from Judea see circumcision as a condition for salvation (v. 1) and the Pharisees in the Jerusalem church see circumcision as necessary for the assimilation of Gentile converts

into the community of faith (v. 5). The two groups were ready for a fight in order to defend their position.

Paul, Barnabas, and other members of their team faced the same issue in Jerusalem, indicating that it was not a local problem only. The text suggests that the believing Pharisees interrupted Paul and Barnabas. The wording of verse 5 and especially the phrase *exanestēsan*, which means to stand up out, imply a spontaneous action in the context of the discussion. Verse 12 clearly indicates that Paul and Barnabas had not finished their report when the incident of verse 5 took place suggesting that public display of emotion probably accompanied the protest of the believing Pharisees (v. 5).

Verse 6 gives insight into the decision-making/conflict-resolution machinery of the early Church: the apostles and the elders. I also observed that between verses 5 and 6 Luke did not suggest any gap in the unfolding of the events. Paul and Barnabas presented the report of what God had done with them, some believing Pharisees raised the issue of the need for believing Gentiles to be circumcised and made to keep the law of Moses with the apostles and elders meeting together to consider the matter.

Verse 7 presents debate as an approach to resolving conflict in the early Church. The phrase much debate/speculations (*pollēs de zētēseōs*) in the verse suggests that the issue was not easy to settle. I am surprised that an issue that borders on the observance of cultural norms became a burning subject. The fact that up until this point such issues still caused tension and division in the church is amazing to me. The many mono-ethnic congregations around the world bear testimony to this assertion.

From a careful reading of the response of Peter, I observed that after recalling what happened in Acts chapter 10, he tried to locate the whole issue of the conversion of

the Gentiles within the larger frame of God's plan, arguing that all that is happening among the Gentiles is the work of God. Peter used the cleansing of the hearts of the Gentile converts (v. 9), and the fact that God gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit (v. 8) as evidences of the hand of God in the conversion of Gentiles. Peter went so far as to align the issue in the debate as a way of putting God to test. He also did not separate between the issues of circumcision and the law. In doing so, Peter seems to be saying that circumcision and the law are part of the same *ethos*, which neither they (including the present advocates) or their ancestors have been able to bear. The way Peter waved his arguments together made everyone in the assembly to be silent.

In verse 11, Peter affirmed an important theological premise of salvation for all people. Salvation is by faith through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. With respect to resolving conflict, Peter in his response appealed to personal experience, with which they all can identify. They all remember the story of the conversion of Cornelius, they all know the problem their ancestors had with following the custom of Moses, and they all know the difficulty they have in personally following the custom they want others to obey. The whole thing underscores the fact that the issue was one of colored perception. The perception of the believing Pharisees appear to be so colored with their sense of cultural superiority (ethnocentrism) that they did not see what God was doing and what he intended to do as transcending their cultural practices. They forgot that they were saved by faith through grace mediated by Jesus Christ and that every other person shall be saved the same way.

Verse 12 shows the assembly now calm and silent, ready to listen to the remaining part of the story of Paul and Barnabas. Although they listened to the testimony

of the evangelists, the issue was not yet completely resolved. Until the matter is resolved, the discussion will not have ended and the issues may resurface. In order to agree on common ground, forestall a reoccurrence, and chart a new course forward, James, who apparently was the chief elder, spoke. Unlike Peter who appealed to his experience in making his point, James corroborated the conversion of Gentiles and their becoming members of the community of faith with Scripture. He apparently accepted the validity of the evidence of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, which James aligned with what the prophets foretold (Amos 9:11-12; Jer. 12:15). The issue, therefore, is not about the possibility of the salvation of Gentiles but about how to instruct them to remain clean and unpolluted. James (vv. 13-18) reasoned that because God first planned that the Gentiles would turn to him and evidence was showing (first from Peter and then from Barnabas and Paul) that God was fulfilling what he had purposed, then the Gentiles who were turning to God (v. 19) should not be troubled with cultural issues. What should be paramount is the issue of purity: abstinence from idols, fornication, and any form of idolatry, which includes things strangled and blood (v. 20). He linked what he said to the demand of God through Moses (Lev. 17-18). A letter was to be written to that effect, if his suggestion were agreeable to all, and sent to the believers in Antioch with a delegate following Paul and Barnabas.

Verse 22 effectively indicates that the whole church was in agreement with the decision, and verse 31 tells the result of the letter: When the members of the church in Antioch read the letter, “they rejoiced at the exhortation.” Regarding the letter as an exhortation and not a decree is a point of interest for missiological reflection in determining the relationship between mission-planted churches and the missionary-sending organization. However, to open that discussion here will not only distract from

the focus of the present discussion but also take this essay much beyond the limited scope of the study.

In summary, Luke was intentional not only in his purpose but also in the location of the Acts 15 narrative. I have also shown that when issues of cultural perspective are clothed in theological garments, they create culture-colored conflict, which can be difficult to resolve, yet when resolved biblically, the people of God rejoice.

Theological Reflections

Because of its mandate, the church must necessarily be cross-cultural in outlook. Jews and Gentiles will be in the church. Hausa, Ibo, and Yoruba will also be in the church, all of whom are to exist together as one community of faith. As no race or gender is superior to the other, no culture is more Christian. People from all cultures must continue to search through to see how they can bring their respective cultures under the discerned will of God with the goal of maintaining the unity of the body (John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:1-16).

Cultural differences create the atmosphere for conflict because people may not always see the same thing in the same way. When one side wants to claim to be right and see the other side as wrong, they create the tension that can lead to conflict. Such conflict can become very difficult to resolve. I think God intends cultural diversity in the church for the enrichment of the community of faith and not for tearing it apart. Intentionally seeing things from the perspective of God and from that of the other person requires maturity and understanding (Heb. 10:24).

The community will always have people who like to make issues out of simple matters because of their ignorance or narrow perspective. Apart from the problem of

ethnocentrism, other possible issue in the mind of the Judaizers is difficult to know; however, James underscores the fact that purity should be the central focus, not the question of circumcision and keeping of the law. Taking up issues with people who see from a narrow perspective will sustain any conflict, and pointing such people to more fundamental issue(s) will lead to faster resolution.

No matter what the issues are, people should know that they could bring their disagreements to the table for discussion. Conflict need not be destructive. Even when, like Paul and Barnabas, leaders feel undermined, they should not aim for the worst but the best out of a challenging situation.

People should cultivate the habit of engaging in constructive debate and exchange of opinion with the view of finding resolution and fostering unity, peace, and progress.

When people cannot reach agreement in conflict situation, they should involve mediators who will be more objective in resolving the issues. People in conflict may not be able to resolve all conflict themselves, but their inability to find a resolution is no reason to abandon the possibility of finding solutions from other people. Looking up to other people for solutions to difficult conflicts requires humility. Paul and Barnabas were leaders in their own right but still submitted to going to Jerusalem to have the matter resolved by other leaders. When they got there, they were apparently willing to allow everyone speak before continuing with their testimony. Resolving conflict requires humility and patience (Eph. 5:21; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5).

On their way to Jerusalem, the delegates did not talk about the issues of the conflict instead, they talked about what God did with them (Acts 15:3). The way people talk about the issues in contention contributes to how big the matter becomes. The

wisdom of Paul and Barnabas telling their testimonies instead of the story of the conflict is that they succeeded in keeping the conflict from escalating. After all, they were not campaigning for more votes but were attempting to let the world around them know what God was doing through them. Believers should be agents of spreading good and not evil reports (Phil. 4:8).

The council meeting in Jerusalem was a necessary process for an emerging community that needed to define its identity in the light of its global mission beyond its local origin. Everything must have a starting point, but growing larger and becoming truly global requires self-redefinition from time to time. The Judaizers' problem was their cultural pride in being the chosen people of God. For them cultural assimilation was a precondition for conversion. Unfortunately, the feeling of cultural superiority still occurs in cross-cultural mission. Eventually, ethnocentrism will always create conflict.

I also find the council necessary in order to bring everyone's concern together. Bringing them together reduces the chances of future culture-colored conflict. Sharp disagreements and heated debate characterized the theological dialogue that took place, but the dialogue was necessary to let people know that the leaders respected their understanding of the issue and valued their opinion. My impression of the meeting was one in which everyone aired their opinions and sustained the arguments in support of such points. The debate was a case of reasoning together to find a common solution to something that threatened the *soul* of the community. My suspicion is that had the issue not been properly resolved, some part of the community would have broken away.

Although Peter and James were also Jews, they did not allow their Jewish sentiments to color their perspective of how to resolve the conflict. They were unlike the

Pharisees who allowed their culture-colored perspective to hinder them from seeing the bigger picture of what God was doing. When leaders/interveners in conflict allow their own cultural sentiments to have the greater part of their perspective in their approach to conflict resolution, they tend to become part of the problem and not part of the solution. The chances are that rather than successfully intervening, they may end up creating a third dimension to the conflict.

Another point of reflection is the community side of the whole episode. The complaint was about a group of people that was part of the larger society of faith and the consideration of the matter at Jerusalem was a group affair having the Gentile part of the Church in mind. Even when the decision-making body decided on what should be done, they allowed for the consensus of the church as a body. In Antioch read the letter was read to the group when it arrived (v. 30). This community dimension is still an important part of life in the non-Western world.

Paul and Barnabas were more concerned with what God was doing as a confirmation of what he will yet do. If they had taken the issues personally, they probably would have reacted differently (cf. Acts 15:36-40). Generally, if one views the approach to resolving the conflict in Acts 15:1-22 from the perspective of modern theories of conflict mediation, the apostles acted as insider partial mediators. The parties recognized the apostles' stake in the matter, and the apostles themselves did not hide the fact that they had interest in the matter. The apostles' approach can be accepted as a biblical model because if a conflict would be resolved in a Christian context, the binding and hopefully overriding factor is the faith that is common to all—the parties to the conflict and the mediator alike. This model is probably an indictment on the Western third party

neutral approach to mediation. The fact is that it will be hard to have a neutral third party. Embracing Christian values means that even the mediator will be partial to the extent that he or she is seeking to glorify God at the end of the resolution process. Insider-partial model of mediation seems to me to be biblical. The insider-partial model may not be the only model, but what came out clearly from how the apostles mediated the conflicts in Acts 6:1-7 and from the case of Acts 15:1-22 was the insider-partial model of mediation.

Resolving Conflict in the Church

The passage reveals principles of conflict resolution, particularly when culture coloration is at the center of the conflict.

First, conflict mediators have their own real cultural sentiments that are a part of them and that come into use intuitively. However, conflict mediators have to be intentional in not allowing such culture color to cloud their judgment when they lead the process of conflict resolution. If they cannot control these feelings, they will become a party to the conflict and not interveners.

Second, conflict mediators need to allow the parties involved to air their feelings, fears, concerns, and conviction. The word *debate* (vv. 2 and 7) suggests that the people spoke freely to defend their convictions. The atmosphere may be tense, but allowing debate admits that the people involved are all in the process of trying to find the truth. Debate keeps the door to new perspectives open and increases the openness of people to change.

Third, I want to highlight the appeal to personal and common experiences. Paul and Barnabas did not stop using their experience of what God did that they witnessed,

and Peter reminded them of how he was also a witness to what God did through him in the house of Cornelius. I find Peter's appeal to their common experience very powerful:

Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. (Acts 15:10-11)

In other words, Peter is saying that if their ancestors and they had not been able to bear the yoke, they should not have placed it on the Gentile converts. If they believed they would be saved by faith through the grace of the Lord Jesus, then the same would be true for the Gentiles. In responding to Peter's speech, the whole assembly kept silent. I believe that this type of appeal can always have the same kind of effect in similar situations.

I find the principle of using scriptural precedence, in this case, appeals to what God said he would do. James carefully aligned what Paul and Barnabas reported to what God had said he would do. In doing so, he not only placed the mass conversion of Gentiles within the purview of Scripture but also made it a privilege for them to be witnesses of the fulfillment of prophecy.

I also see the principle of looking at issues from God's perspective. In order to discover God's view of issues, leaders must think of what God will consider more important in a particular situation. Leaders must also think of what will be more pleasing to God and bring greater glory to God at the end of the day. When leaders keep these facts in mind in the process of resolving conflict, the chances that their culture-colored perspective will overshadow their judgment is slim.

Next, I see the principle of carrying people along with open communication. Carrying people along with open communication becomes inevitable once the issue at

stake is of general interest. In the text, I observed that the matter was first raised at the general gathering before the council met to discuss it. The Apostles therefore gave the people feedback about the decision reached. Another aspect of communication is what made them send delegates and rather than a letter back to Antioch. Giving people the opportunity to speak out is also a way of recognizing and empowering them.

The last principle I want to point out is that in resolving conflict, especially culture-colored conflict, leaders should not compromise holiness and purity of life. Whatever considerations and concessions leaders give, they should not diminish holiness and purity of life for any reason.

Summary

In establishing the biblical and theological foundation for resolving culture-colored conflict, I have tried to demonstrate from the study of Acts 15:1-22 that culture-colored conflict is not only a reality but also that it can be resolved in a way that will preserve the unity of the Church. Conflicts do not have to be destructive. I have also drawn out principles from the case studies to show that if all the parties to any conflict are willing to submit one to another in the fear of God and to think of the greater goal of the glory of God, conflict resolution can lead to transformation and not just to a solution to a problem. I shall return to these conflicts resolution principles later in the dissertation.

Overview of Study

Chapter 2 reviews selected and relevant literature to the research. I surveyed theories from Christian and secular writers as a basis for discussing culture and conflict resolution in culturally sensitive situations. Both reviews focused on culture and conflict resolution with an emphasis on the interrelatedness of the two.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed description of the methodology of the research. It explains the design instruments and discusses the method of data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and discusses the analysis of the findings in pursuance of the purpose of the research.

Chapter 5 discusses the major findings of the study and their implications for biblical conflict resolution in a multicultural context. It also suggests a model for making conflict resolution more biblical in a multicultural setting. Additionally, it makes suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to describe the phenomenon of cultural coloration and its influence on African Christian leaders in Jos Nigeria and the resulting impact on conflict resolution. The secondary purpose is to help mediators/interveners in a conflict to be more biblical in their approach. Although the focus of the study is the mediator, understanding the processes of conflict, conflict mediation, and conflict resolution is necessary background information to taking a closer look at the impact of cultural coloration on the mediator, who is the focus of this project.

The present chapter discusses conflict, conflict resolution, and conflict mediation from relevant literature. It also discusses African cultural values as they relate to conflict resolution, arguing that these cultural values have the tendency to interfere in the processes of conflict mediation by African Christian leaders and possibly color their approach. A good starting point is discussing what conflict is.

Understanding Conflict

Conflict is the struggle for supremacy that arises because of differences and interferences in the respective values and goals of people relationally connected, leading usually to disharmony and generally operating at different levels. People can view conflict in several ways.

Because conflict can be perceived in several ways and at several levels of operation, “conflict is about more than appears on the surface. It is involved with identity and meaning—who we see ourselves to be, and how we make and find meaning in our

interactions with others, ideas, and the world” (LeBaron, “Cultural and Worldview Frames”). One implication of seeing conflict from many possible vantage points is that conflict is perceived as bad and unproductive. This perception is wrong because productively, conflict can serve as a catalyst for the release of the latent energies in a group because it creates a sense of urgency in looking for creative solutions to the conflict (Walton 111). Conflict also helps in the affirmation of group or personal identity and drawing of borderlines (Leas and Kittlaus 38). Conflict draws people of like minds together even though it can encourage polarization in a group. In conflict situations, people can bear with circumstances they would otherwise have found unbearable. Ronald L. Koteskey observes, “God uses our conflict to advance his work” (2). Conflict is not always bad because it can enhance group productivity; however, some conflict hinders performance. The first is productive and the second is counterproductive (Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy 487). Some “conflict offers us the chance to grow, to change our minds and to create new commitments based upon the truth God reveals” (Van Yperen 241). This positive view does not mean conflict has no negative sides. For example, Jackson W. Carroll found out that conflict plays an important role in making pastors doubt their call to ministry or consider leaving the pastorate for another church-related position rather than dropping out altogether. He notes further that because of conflict the number of clergy interested in serving as congregational pastors is reducing (168-69). Therefore, ordinary conflict in and of itself is not always bad. The perception and attitude of people towards conflict is what can make conflict problematic.

Effect of Perception on Conflict

Van Yperen sees conflict as a hurdle to jump over rather than an obstacle to avoid. He says, "As hurdles make the runner, conflict defines the leader" (239). He notes that how people perceive conflict will determine their approach to resolving it. If confronting conflict is viewed in terms of sin, leaders may likely be passive and accommodating, and if it is viewed in terms of power, then the tendency is to confront it aggressively and authoritatively (240). The way people perceive conflict can influence how they resolve it in many ways. First is the size of an issue. When the parties perceive or define the issue in terms of their personal investment into the problem (egocentric perception) and the existence of hidden agendas (unspoken but important concerns or objectives), they tend to react sharply. Second, when the parties see the resolution of the conflict in terms of win-lose, total satisfaction or total frustration, zero-sum (that is, all-or-nothing), or irresolvable (Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy 487), they tend to react with desperation. Perception will also determine the amount of emotional heat in a conflict situation. James G. Clawson notes that conflicts arise frequently in the business world, sometimes accompanied by heated feelings and accusations. If not properly managed, conflict can lead to loss of morale and breakdown in cohesiveness with the one hurt searching for payback (144-45). J. Wendell Lowe also comments on conflict:

[C]onflict is not necessarily equated with bad feeling, hostile attitudes, or angry outbursts. But when some kind of behavior is manifested that strikes against another person or group, then conflict exists. Hostile or bad feelings certainly have the potential for some type of conflict, but until those feelings are acted upon they remain primarily an intra personal problem and not an interpersonal or substantive conflict. (17-18)

The fact that a person feels bad or angry is not in itself a sign of or a demonstration of conflict. Until such feelings are vented on another person, conflict may not result.

Attitude towards Conflict

A proper attitude to conflict will make it less threatening and create an atmosphere for creativity in the process of resolution. In this respect, Ronald S. Kraybill suggests the following:

- Conflict is neither good nor bad. It is a tool to assure proper outcomes.
- Conflict is constructive when it leads to necessary changes and when it improves the self-respect of those involved.
- The result of conflict resolution should not be to deny the conflict, or reduce it, but to direct it towards constructive change (57).

With the right attitude, the parties to a conflict are not likely to do things intentionally that will escalate the situation.

Conflict, Worldview, and Culture

As important as attitude is in making conflict less threatening and less problematic, understanding the nature of conflict is crucial for developing the right attitude. In this respect, William D. Kimsey, Sallye S. Trobaugh, Bruce C. McKinney, Emily R. Hoole, Amy D. Thelk, and Susan L. Davis suggest that the “first element in understanding the nature of conflict at the intrapersonal, dyadic, small group, and organizational levels is worldview” (487). The way one sees the world determines his or her perception of conflict and its resolution (Kassera 93). This idea is true because the basis for belonging to a group or community is subscription to the worldview of the group whether it is a group in the church or in the workplace. Because the smaller groups are also part of a larger whole, an atmosphere for conflict is usually in place, especially when every unit created out of a community or organization will eventually develop its

own worldview. The more units in a system, the more worldviews will be in place, and the more the worldviews in place, the more the likelihood of interpersonal and interunit conflict. The reason why conflict is likely to increase is that “[w]orldviews are those systems or structures within which our values, beliefs, and assumptions lie. They influence how we see ourselves and others (identities) and how we make meaning of our lives and relationships” (LeBaron, “Cultural and Worldview Frames”). When conflict does arise, individuals are caught in the struggle between being *pulled* by the smaller group to commit to their worldview and yielding to pressures of conformity at broader community or organizational comfort levels as the case may be (Kimsey, Trobaugh, McKinney, Hoole, Thelk, and Davis 488). This pull of commitment is also true when the conflict is between people from different cultural backgrounds with each of the parties wanting to maintain allegiance to their own worldview. Conflict, therefore, must be viewed “as an expressed struggle where opposition and cooperation exist within the same relationship” (Gangel and Canine 140) because of the interplay of worldviews.

Another dimension to understanding the nature of conflict and an aspect of worldview is culture:

Culture is an essential part of conflict and conflict resolution. Cultures are like underground rivers that run through our lives and relationships, giving us messages that shape our perceptions, attributions, judgments, and ideas of self and others. Though cultures are powerful, they are often unconscious, influencing conflict and attempts to resolve conflict in imperceptible ways.... Culture is a factor in conflict whether it plays a central role or influences it subtly and gently. For any conflict that touches us where it matters, where we make meaning and hold our identities, there is always a cultural component.” (LeBaron, “Culture and Conflict”)

Michelle LeBaron notes, “As we communicate using different cultural habits and meaning systems, both conflict and harmony are possible outcomes of any interaction”

(“Communication Tools”). Because of the complexity of culture in how people make meaning of spoken words, the chances of misunderstanding what the other person says is high. This is more so when such words are spoken with strong emotional expression. When misunderstanding is not clarified, conflict can result.

The challenge that culture poses to sustaining conflict arises because to a people, their way of thinking about and doing things is the best. They evaluate what others do from the lenses of their own culture, and more often than not they see what other people do as unusual, wrong, and inferior (Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus 629). The dynamics of cultural differences fuel the tension that can lead to conflict (Augsburger 16). Even within the same culture, understanding culture-based communication during conflict can be difficult. David W. Augsburger comment on the dynamics of conflict, culture, and communication:

Conflict in all cultures is characterized by multilevel communication, alternate movement between subtle cues and visible behaviors, intricate combinations of covert responses and overt reactions, ambivalent feelings and polarized perspectives, defensive strategies of concealment and offensive attempts to provoke a crisis, and so on. All these multifactorial, multilevel, multimeaning signals, cues and behaviors leave the knowledgeable participant confused and the outsider confounded. (24)

This challenge posed by culture notwithstanding, culture helps to set the rule of what is acceptable and what is not.

Having discussed culture in relationship to conflict in general terms, I want to look at Nigerian cultural values and conflict resolution/mediation. Knowledge of Nigerian cultural values is necessary for the identification of possible cultural values that can interfere with the mediation process and to which mediators can be blind. The knowledge is also necessary before a discussion on a biblical model of conflict

mediation; however, because no understanding of Nigerian culture can be complete without looking at the larger picture of Africa, the discussion of Nigerian traditional values begins with a look at African values.

African Cultural Value and Conflict Resolution

A review of literature on what constitutes African cultural values shows that writers on the subject agree on the followings: value for elders (older persons), value for religion, value for feasts and rituals, value for life, value for community life, value for harmonious relationships, value for the weak, and value for land. (Emeakaroha; Ekwunife; Vogl; Blake; Isizoh; Pope Paul VI; Magesa; Sindima; Mbiti; Parrinder; Stine and Wendland). These cultural values are important to the people and, in one way or the other, come to the fore in the approach to conflict resolution. Table 2.1 shows the values with a brief description of their respective essence.

Many of the African cultural values listed clearly agree with biblical values in so much that one wonders whether they are distinctive to Africa. For example, the value of showing concern for the weak is in consonance with Paul's injunction in Galatians 6:2. In respect of this possible observation, I want to say that the uniqueness of the values in the African context rest on three premises. The first premise is the meaning ascribed to each of the values. In most cases, the meanings that Africans ascribe to the values are not the same as biblical meaning. For example, when the Bible says a thing or place is sacred, it means that such a thing or place is set apart as holy from other similar things or place, and is available for the use of God. In African understanding, the sense of the holy is not limited to God but extends to communion with the ancestors and numerous other spirits

believed to be part of the invisible members of the community. The description of the others' values also show the way Africans understand them.

The second premise for the distinctiveness of the African cultural values is in the way of expressing each of the cultural values. Africans express each of the values in ways that are consistent with their belief and thought patterns. Commenting on the implication of the way Africans express their cultural values, Laurenti Magesa suggests two forms of Christian thought systems, and faith expressions in Africa today. One is the official expression of faith and the other she refers to as popular expression. The former is in line with the teachings of seminaries, Bible training schools, and sermons from the pulpit. The latter is the appropriation and expression of the teachings of the church in ways consistent with African culture. She says, "[African] people struggle to respond to their Christian calling, but they are compelled from within to do so without denying their culture, the conception and understanding of life that defines them as Africans" (10). Clearly the popular thought systems and expressions of faith can lead to syncretism however, the idea underscores the tension between biblical expression of values and African cultural expression of the same values.

The third premise is the about motivation. The motive for Christian pursuit of the different values includes the desire to obey God, the demonstration of loyalty to him, and the responsibility to be a witness for Christ. The ultimate motive of a Christian is to embrace and live by the values in order to bring glory to God. Contrarily, the major reason why Africans embrace and live by those values is the fear of what can happen if they act in disobedience (Parrinder 68-74).

Even though the understanding, expression, and motive of Africans to live by these values are not the same and without biblical expectation, the values can serve as a bridge for the gospel and spiritual formation. In other words the cultural values become a part of God's prevenient grace to Africans. Another positive side of African cultural values is the many possibilities they can afford leaders in the process of conflict resolution. Because they are shared values, they can serve as a basis for appealing to people who are in conflict with each other (see Table 2.1).

Before I continue with the discussion, I also want to observe that although the values are common to most African tribes, the expression of each one of them is not always the same in different tribes. One finds particularities in forms of expression as one moves from tribe to tribe. For example, the Yoruba will prostrate to express respect for an elder while greeting him or her, but the Hausa will stoop down to show the same respect. They have the same value but express it in different forms.

Table 2.1. A Description of African Cultural Values

Cultural Value	Brief Description of Value
Value for the sacred	A consciousness of the invisible presence of God, the spirits, and the ancestors is a key cultural value in African worldview. People are required to take care to ascertain the will of the spirit to whom sacrifices may be due or from whom protection may be sought as such the world of the spirits is regarded as sacred and valued as such (Emeakaroha; Ekwunife; Pope Paul VI; Magesa 61).
Value for elders (older persons)	Africans accept the supremacy of hierarchical structures. The reverence and honor bequeath on the ancestors filter through the elders. One's parents, grandparents and other older relatives are regarded as living embodiments of wisdom and of the good moral life. Old age therefore is an important value to the African (Blake; Emeakaroha; Magesa 70; Vogl).
Value for religion	Religion is intrinsically part of the African man/woman. There cannot be a being without religion. To be is to be religious. No "secular" existence for African because religion truly permeates the totality of life (Blake; Emeakaroha; Magesa 203; Parrinder 68-74; Vogl).
Value for feasts and rituals	The African value for the sacred and for religion naturally leads to a value for feasts and rituals. In addition to religious feasts and rituals, the relationship of the community with the spirit world and the ancestors is maintained through various feasts and rituals (Blake; Parrinder 68-74)
Value for life	In African worldview, life is sacred. All living beings and visible nature see itself as linked with the world of the invisible and the spirit. Human in particular have never been considered as ordinary matter limited to earthly life. Africans recognize in him the presence and power of another spiritual element, in virtue of which human life is always related to the after-life. (Emeakaroha; Pope Paul VI; Sindima 142).
Value for community life	In Africa, the extended family system is widely practiced and highly valued. The system assimilates uncles and aunties into the role of parents. Cousins are equal to brothers and sisters; and one's nephews and nieces are regarded as children. A person is an individual to the extent that he/she is a member of a family, a clan or community. I am, because we are. (Emeakaroha; Ekwunife; Mbiti 108-9; Magesa 65; Pope Paul VI; Vogl).
Value for harmonious relationships	Africans love nature and feel one with it. Africans seek harmony with nature and fellow human beings. Harmony is achieved by sharing its life and strength. The African values the whole of creation as sacred. To them nature is neither uncanny nor available for subjugation and exploitation. It is something sacred, participating in the essential sacred nature of God himself and of all reality (Emeakaroha; Pope Paul VI; Stine and Wendland 98).
Value for the weak	Africans show great concern for weak members of the family. The sick are not left alone; the aged live with the members of their families. Euthanasia is not considered as an option to end the pains of these weak members of the society. They are loved and cared for until they die and join the family members who went ahead of them (Pope Paul VI; Magesa 155; Vogl).
Value for land	The environment is sacred; it should be protected and preserved. Land is the property of nobody and everybody; it should be shared. It belongs to the ancestors and to the unborn as well as to the living. Each family should farm as much land as they need. Access should be equal (Magesa 61-62; Vogl).

Conflict is a collective concern in traditional African society, something that involves the social life of all: “[T]here is no ‘private dispute’ of any seriousness, since a dispute affects everyone in one way or the other” (Osamba). Without denying the influence of Westernization, this idea of conflict is not a forgotten issue because many of the African cultural values still influence the African worldview. In talking about conflict and conflict resolution, therefore, African cultural values occupy a vital place, especially the value of respect for elders.

For example, LeBaron observes that the indigenous processes of conflict resolution in many African nations emphasize relationships and hierarchies:

Elders have substantial power, and when they intervene in a conflict or a negotiation, their words are respected. This is partly because certain elders are believed to have access to supernatural powers that can remove protective shields at best and cause personal disaster at worst. (“Culture-Based Negotiation Styles”)

Elders derive their powers from the belief that they represent the ancestors.

Another reason for respecting elders and hierarchies is the concept of common ancestral lineage (*álájòbí* in Yoruba). When people in conflict and the mediator(s) are from the same clan, the spirit of the ancestors is present to join in the matter and the physical representative of the ancestors is the living elder. When mediators have found it hard in resolving a conflict, they appeal to *álájòbí* for settlement, negotiation, or appeasement as the case may be. One can plead with the power of *álájòbí*, bear witness with *álájòbí*, and bless with *álájòbí*. Mark Davidheiser makes a similar observation about the Madinka people of the Gambia. He notes, “Madinka can be very creative in constructing and inventing kinship and collective identities;... [w]hen the mediators appeal to disputants to forgive and reconcile, they can greatly strengthen the force of their

appeal by invoking such ties” (“Special Affinities”). Although, Africans respect elders because of their age and position in the society, the concept of collective identities represented by kinship or *alajobi* provide elders with additional power for mediation in time of conflict.

The recent (September 2008) resignation from office of Thabo Mbeki, the former president of South Africa, is a contemporary example of the respect and power of elders in resolving conflict in Africa. The political party elders asked him to resign from the office of the president and he did so without a fight for the constitutionality of the matter. Although Mbeki denied the allegation of influencing judicial processes against the chairperson of the party, Jacob Zuma, Mbeki’s former vice president, he nonetheless resigned his presidency according to the wish of the elders.

Relationship is at the heart of the conflict resolution processes in Africa. The strength of relationship is, however, rooted in the cultural values of the people of Africa. The relationship may be as members of the same family or as people in the same community; and it may be between the living and their ancestors. Religion or kinship is another possible tie for relationship. Whichever, relationship is important at the heart of the mediation process.

From the discussion so far, the aspects of culture intrinsically connected with the processes of conflict resolution in the African context are cultural values. Studies elsewhere have also confirmed that cultural values greatly influence the nature of mediation (Ho; Davidheiser, *Role of Culture*; Khoo). The question is to what degree these cultural values interfere with the way African Christian leaders mediate in conflict and how they can be more biblical in their approach.

Before carrying out the research, however, I want to further the discussion on the conceptual framework of conflict, conflict resolution, and conflict mediation.

Causes of Conflict—Generally, Theologically, and within Congregational Life

The next important question concerns the causes of conflict. Although the discussion so far contains glimpses of what may be responsible for causing conflict, I want to talk more on what people disagree on and about the causes of conflict.

John Stott writes on causes of conflict, with particular reference to industrial relations:

Wherever there is tension in industrial relations, let alone collision, the fault is seldom if ever limited to one side. Our basic self-centeredness, skews our vision so that we see everything from our own perspective. We seek our own interests rather than others. It is a situation of conflict born out of suspicion and rivalry, instead of a situation of mutual service born of respect and trust. (*Our Social and Sexual Revolutions* 39)

What Stott is saying is that self-centeredness is the primary cause of conflicts. Because human vision is blurred, human beings see things from their own perspective. People seek their own interests rather than the interests of others. They suspect other people, disrespect and distrust them, because they see them as their rivals. The last point is probably because of the unspoken sense of competition that makes everyone want to win always and outdo others.

Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy identify the following possible causes of conflict between people: (1) having differences in values, beliefs, or goals; (2) having high levels of task or lateral interdependence; (3) competing for scarce resources or rewards; (4) being under high levels of stress; (5) having role ambiguity and role conflict; (6) acting inconsistently with the vision and goals they set out to achieve; and, (7) having a lack of

communication between parties (487). Lowe makes the following illustration concerning the causes of conflicts:

The human elements—breakdown of communication, variations in personality, and differences of background—take their toll on relationships. When all of that is mixed in with a high dose of stress and pressure from everyday duties that eat away at our very souls, it is a marvel that any of us get along! Another reason for conflict we must not overlook is Satan. (7)

In addition to human factors, Lowe calls attention to social and satanic causes of conflict. The implication of this fact is that dealing with all the human causes of conflict, will not eliminate conflicts in the society because of satanic influence.

For Edward G. Dobson, Speed B. Leas, and Marshall Shelly, the potential for conflict is rooted in poor relationship, personal shortcomings, unresolved problems, and congregational/organizational patterns of behavior (95).

With particular reference to unresolved problems, because of training, experience, environment, exposure, and maturity, leaders do not all understand and possibly interpret the same data in the same way. They approach one issue in different ways; they value different things to varying degrees; and, they all do not have the same goals. Because of a combination of these factors, some problems are difficult to resolve.

Making a theological case for the cause of conflict, Richard Patterson disagrees that societal stress is the cause of conflict. He says “[T]he cause of conflict is not the stress of our times; it is rooted in every person’s struggle for power along with the variety with which God has created us” (81). When God created humanity with the capacity to be different from each other, he intended it for their good (1 Cor. 12:4-7). The issue, however, is that the ability to see things from different perspectives that God intended for the profit of humanity becomes the cause of their problem. The explanation for this

problem resides in the theological concept of human depravity. Because of the fallen nature, people do things that are not only contrary to the will of God but to their fellow human beings and to themselves (Rom. 1:28-31).

Relative to church congregational life, Carroll notes that the presence and mixture of different generations in a congregation creates important and sometimes conflict-laden dynamics (35). Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird agree with this assertion (244-45). Carroll also points out that the presence of special interest groups tends to increase contention, often leading to conflict (47). Another possible cause of conflict is the cross pressure that exists between clergy and their members arising from the voluntary nature of the church community—a nature he refers to as *de facto congregationalism*. The clergy tend to see things from a perspective different from that of the laity who are exposed to many influences outside the church. When pastors challenge congregations from their perspectives, conflict can result (53). Carroll also discovered a correlation between the leadership style of pastors and the cause of conflict. He says, “[R]egardless of the pastor’s style, by far the largest percentage of conflicts ... had to do with pastoral leadership” (140). Emphasis on innovation is also “positively related to major conflict in the congregation (149). In this respect, Towns, Stetzer, and Bird note that when people begin to talk of innovations, they should also be prepared for questions, opposition, or even hostility (243). Another contributor to congregational conflict is disagreement over the role of the clergy (178).

Carroll also reports that a “congregation experiencing conflict often disagreed about money, staffing, building, different visions of congregational mission, use of

inclusive language, liturgical and music styles” (47). Still on the issue of conflict in a congregation, the opinion of David W. Kale with Mel McCullough is that:

Conflict develops when opinions, positions, and proposals clash with regards to choices the church is making concerning its ministry. If a struggle erupts over whose proposals, positions, and opinions will prevail, the church is in conflict.... [C]onflict is power struggle over differences. (13, 43)

A careful look at these causes of conflict shows that the underlying cause of conflict is human nature. The one word that captures the reason why human beings engage in conflict is misunderstanding. In this respect, I agree with the observation of Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy that most conflict results as a result of misunderstanding and a breakdown in communication. By improving communication and listening skills and spending time networking with others, leaders can minimize the level of conflict among people and between groups (487). I want to note that though Carroll reports on the congregational life of churches, his observations are, applicable to the larger society.

Generally, when people think or feel that their interest is deemed unimportant, they tend to disagree with other people. Human self-centeredness usually blurs their vision and makes them see only their side of the issue. Consequently, they want to defend what they see and regard as their right even if doing so requires a fight. The truth is that when people are patient enough to listen to and try to see things from the perspective of the other party, they realize that they have more in common than they previously thought they did.

I can conclude, therefore, that the selfishness and self-centeredness of people is the baseline from which conflict begins. Unfair criticisms, misunderstanding, suspicion, rivalry, fighting, the struggle for power, and stress are all the outworking of the

selfishness within human being. The Lord Jesus Christ confirmed this idea in Mark 7:20-23. James also said the same thing (Jas. 4:1-3). What happens is that once started, conflict can get out of the hands of those who started it, and like a wildfire become uncontrollable with Satan taking advantage of the situation.

Concept of the Processes Involved in Conflict

In order to understand the processes involved in a conflict, researchers have identified kinds of conflict, levels of conflict, levels operating in a conflict, and the phases of the development of conflict.

Kinds of Conflicts

The three identified kinds of conflict are intrapersonal, interpersonal, and substantive. The first is about the struggle that goes on within a person. The second is about how a person feels about another person, and the third is about disagreements over facts, methods, goals, and values (Lowe 10; Leas and Kittlaus 30-34).

Interpersonal conflict seems to result from the fact that one person's chemistry does not seem to agree with that of another person. The people involved just do not get along well. They have no issues to resolve and no scores to settle. With respect to the subject of reconciliation, only substantive conflict would require an intermediary for resolution.

Apart from the first kind of conflict, which has to do with an individual, the other two operate at different possible levels. David Cormack amplifies the three kinds of conflict as inner conflict, which is the battle that rages within; interpersonal conflict, which is conflict between persons; family conflict, which is conflict within family members; intergroup, which is conflict between groups. Others are cities in conflict,

which explains intersocietal conflicts in cities; international conflict, which is conflict between nations; and, spiritual conflict, which is conflict with spiritual forces of darkness (17-26).

Levels/Phases Involved in the Process of Conflict

Theories suggest different kinds of levels in conflict, substantive, psychological, and procedural levels of conflict (Moore). At the substantive level people are concerned with the issues that need to be resolved (the *what* of the conflict). The psychological level of the conflict is about psychological issues (*how it affects me*; revolves around issues of power, status, emotions, and other relational parts of the conflictual interaction). The procedural level of conflict is about resolving conflict (how it is addressed and with what assistance). Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen suggest that three conversations are needed in any conflict: the what conversation, the feeling conversation, and the identity conversation. Lisa Schirch suggests that conflict has three levels: material/analytical, social/relational, and symbolic/perceptual (14). LeBaron also identifies three levels: material, communicative, and symbolic. She emphasizes that each level relates to the others (“*Bridging Troubled Waters*”).

Still on the concept of the processes involved in conflict, some authors prefer to see conflict as developing in phases rather than levels. For example, Cormack suggests a three-phase process (35-46). The first phase is *separation*, which starts with emphasizing the differences between the parties and moves onto widening the gap of relationship until the parties begin to feel unsafe with the other person. The second phase is *divergence* during which parties prepare for confrontation by first strengthening their positions and undermining the position of the other party. Each engages in laundering self-image at the

expense of the other party. The third phase is *destruction*. It is the phase of all-out conflict during which “the parties lose all their reference points: Christians act like demons; freedom fighters act like oppressors; and those who fight for peace learn only the skills of war” (44). Before looking at what other writers have to say on the issue, I want to observe that contrary to what Cormack suggests, the last phase of conflict may not always be destructive in the sense of people damaging each other. The last phase of conflict could be a parting of ways such as what happened between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark (Acts 15:36-40).

Each of the authors mentioned identifies three levels/phases in a conflict, which I want to put together as what the conflict is all about, how the parties to the conflict feel about it, and what they are doing, willing to do, or not willing to do about the conflict. The ability to conceptualize these facts about any conflict is not only important to understanding what is happening but also to resolving the issue.

Lowe discusses five levels that I see as amplification of the three levels:

- Level I—Predicament. At this first level of conflict, the concern of the parties is to settle the quarrel and find solutions to the predicament. People are open and honest without distrust of or blaming one another. As soon as the issue is resolved, relationships are enhanced (27).
- Level II—Disagreement. At level II conflict, the objectives of the parties shift to that of protecting self. As much as each of the parties wants the conflict resolved, each still wants to come out looking good without losing face. As a result, the language takes the form of blaming the other person as expressed in higher emotional style. The

respective parties begin to look for those who would empathize with their position and probably help in solving the problem (27-28).

- Level III—Contest. At level III, the conflict is moving to a higher level. The merit of the issue is no longer important. Each party simply wants to have its own way: “At lower level conflict, people still clearly see the problem and possible solutions, but in level three conflicts, the issue and the solutions seem remotely possible if at all. Most cannot see clearly and accurately what is truly happening” (28). The language becomes that of dichotomizing, universalizing, magnification, and fixation on feelings. Everything is black or white, right or wrong. Words such as everybody, nobody, never, and always are common. The ideas and motives of the other person are seen as evil while those of self are regarded as righteous. The focus shifts from facts of the conflict to feelings. At level three conflict, groups and coalitions are forming without any clear leadership even though they are polarizing the church or organization. This formation of groups and coalition makes separating issues from people difficult. (28-30)

- Level IV—Fight or Flight. At this point, the goal is to break relationship by withdrawing or getting the others to leave. “Parties insist on their own will at the expense of the whole, denouncing the integrity of those not in the group and believing that those in opposition are basically hypocrites” (Lowe 31). The concern is that of dealing with the opponents (30-31).

- Level V—Intractable. At level V, the conflict has reached a point at which the parties begin to feel justified to deal with what the opponent is doing in order to prevent further damage (31).

Dobson, Leas, and Shelley comment on an intractable level of conflict:

Withdrawal from the conflict is next to impossible for the parties at this level. Since one feels called by God to do these “mighty acts,” pulling back would be seen as retreat, a demonstration that one does not truly believe. (93)

When a conflict gets to the point where opposing parties feel justified to carry on the dispute, none of them will be willing to withdraw their “sword.” The situation becomes complicated when any of them use the name of God to justify his or her position.

Lowe is not alone in suggesting a five-level concept in the processes involved in conflict. Kale with McCullough also suggest five levels involved in conflict. The first two cover the pre-conflict, and the others, levels of actual conflict. These levels are awareness of differences, confrontation of the differences, power struggles, fight or flight, and intractable differences (42). Similarly, the case of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15: 36-40 suggests a five-level/phase process. A careful reading of the passage reveals the following as the steps leading to their parting of ways. The steps are (1) agreement on where to go and what to do (v. 36); (2) disagreement on who should go or not go with them; (3) determination on Barnabas’ part to have his way (v. 37) and Paul’s insistence on his own position (v. 38); (4) A sharply contentious and irresolvable (that is intractable) situation (v. 39); and (5) separation with each one going in a different direction and with the person of his choice (vv. 39-40) and an aborted common mission. The fact that Paul would later request John Mark (the man over whom the conflict started) and refer to Mark as useful to him for ministry (2 Tim. 4:11) is another matter on the long-term possibility of reconciliation. I will not open a discussion on that subject here.

I want to point out the following processes from the previous incident:

- Agreement on a common goal,
- Disagreement on the details of how to reach the goal,

- Insistence on respective opinions,
- Breakdown in communication and relationship, and
- Abandonment of the goal they intended to achieve.

My experience has shown that most conflicts go through these steps.

Looking at these five levels in the light of the three-level concept previously discussed, I want to observe that in Dobson, Leas, and Shelly, Kale with McCullough, and the case of Paul and Barnabas, levels I and II are concerned with what the conflict is all about. Level III is concerned with how the parties feel about it, and levels IV and V are concerned with what the parties are doing, willing to do, or not willing to do about it.

For Kimsey, Trobaugh, McKinney, Hoole, Thelk, and Davis, conflict goes through seven phases with each phase allowing for varying degrees of the possibility of intervention (487-99). The phases are *objectification* when the individual begins to prove who has the correct viewpoint. B. L. Ware and W. A. Linkugel refer to this phase as vindication (273-83). The second phase is *personification*. In this phase, the dissatisfied person takes the focus off of self and points it toward the others he or she is trying to prove wrong. The third phase is *magnification* when the aggrieved person tries to convince self and like-minded people that the view expressed about others in the second phase is real and sustainable. By taking facts out of context, overstatement, “the speaker attempts to bolster, or magnify, his [or her] image to turn criticism away from him- or herself” (Kimsey, Trobaugh, McKinney, Hoole, Thelk, and Davis 493). *Glorification* is the fourth phase. It “is the act of exalting, glorifying, and venerating. Often characterized by self-aggrandizement” (493). The aim is to create a favorable impression of the speaker or whoever is been glorified. The next phase is *reification* by which the individual

generates situations that provide confirmation for the way he or she perceives the issues at stake. *Signification* is the next phase. At this point, issues get new meanings in order to influence the drawing of conclusions that will be in line with views promoted in phases 1 through 5. When disagreement get to the phase of *signification* the conflict is already locked in place because so much has been invested into it. What is left is to achieve justification for the position the individual is promoting. *Justification* as the final phase of conflict “involves vindication for the purpose of legitimizing claims made earlier when no tangible evidence or support was present to warrant the positions taken” (495).

From all the discussion on the processes involved in conflict, I want to say that every full-blown conflict comes through a series of stages, enough for one to say that conflict is a process not an event. This advance is true regardless of whether conflict is accepted to move forward in levels and or phases, and whether the number of levels or phases through which a conflict develops is three, five, seven, or more. Today’s all-out conflict did not begin today, and the conflict for tomorrow is already in the making. The stages are evidently progressive and not necessarily cyclical. From a difference of opinion between only two people to the recruitment of like-minded others to join a course or cause of which they were not initially a part, to open confrontation with a loss of restraint, unresolved conflict continues to grow until it becomes not only intractable but destructive.

Another important item is that in the processes of the development of conflict, these levels and/or phases are not necessarily time bound. Some conflict arrives full-blown after several years, and others move so rapidly through the stages that one may not

easily appreciate the fact that they went through a series of processes to get to the full-blown stage.

Researchers believe that at different points in the process of the development of conflict are opportunities for intervention:

When objectification is high, the individual may be intense in judgment, but he or she is likely to still be alone in his or her thinking. If leadership can resolve the issues, the conflict can be contained before growing and spreading. In the phase of personification, leadership also, has the opportunity and ability to resolve the individual's issues prior to critical mass growing. When individuals are processing magnification, glorification, or reification, it is likely that outside mediation will be necessary. A group of like-minded individuals is forming and may be resistant to leadership's attempts to solve the issue (especially if glorification is high or the conflict is with leadership). When a group of like-minded individuals has reached the point of signification or justification, the likelihood of successful mediation diminishes. Significant internal damage has occurred. All egos are involved and too much face would be lost even in a win-win situation. (Kimsey, Trobaugh, McKinney, Hoole, Thelk, and Davis 497)

Notwithstanding the kinds, levels, and phases of conflict discussed, conflict can be rooted in moral differences, religious differences, family and gender-related issues, social-political differences, socioeconomic differences, and inter/ intra-organizational dynamics, among others. Conflict stemming from one of these roots can be of any of the kinds discussed earlier, go through the levels mentioned, and progress through the various stages of conflict development.

From the discussion so far, I have shown that conflict is a normal part of life. Conflict is real and expected. An individual can be in conflict within himself or herself. People can be in conflict with others in almost any setting, and conflict can arise because of almost anything so long as no parties involved are of the same accord on all the issues that bind them together. Conflict in itself is not bad when seen as another way of

learning. However, when seen as opportunity to prove a point or win a price, then it can go on to become destructive. Conflict cannot exist without anybody's personal investment in the process (Kassera 94). All the parties to a conflict have their respective reason(s) for getting involved. The reasons may be overt or covert; they may be small or big. The fact remains that hardly will anyone get involved in a conflict without a reason. This reason will motivate and determine investment into the conflict process, and this investment usually prolongs the life of the conflict and influences the openness of the respective parties to resolution and possible reconciliation. "The more important the conflict to the disputants, the less likely it [will] be resolved" (Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus 351).

A mediator should determine what the parties are trying to accomplish when mediating in a conflict, whether they are more concerned with focusing on the issues and working out solutions or whether they are concerned with winning the battle, hurting one another, and being in charge. The former are characteristics of lower-level conflicts and the latter of higher-level conflict. Lowe comments on levels of conflicts:

As people move from a lower-level conflict into a higher-level, the amount of distorted thinking usually increases. When people become more anxious or frightened, it becomes more difficult to think clearly about the situation. This distorted thinking is shown by the language used. The more specific the language, such as, "The pastor hasn't visited me in four months," the lower the level of the conflict. But when the language becomes broad, rambling, and scattered, such as, "The pastor never feeds me any more," signifies a higher level of conflict. (27)

As an unresolved conflict moves from low level to high level, the personal investment in the process increases, and the chances that the initial reason for the conflict would metamorphose to something bigger are also high. The conflict between Bulus and Angela is an illustration of this point.

Bulus and Angela were staff on the payroll of the church. By virtue of qualification and on-the-job experience, Angela, a female, had the responsibility of supervising Bulus, a male. The idea of being supervised by a female did not go well with Bulus who believed that culturally and regardless of experience a female should not be asked to supervise a male, especially in church and spiritual matters. At the beginning of the conflict, Bulus refused to carry out instructions from Angela without any reason. Angela would do his job in addition to her own until she could no longer continue that way. She reported the matter and issued him with a query the next time he refused to carry out instructions. Bulus resorted to insulting Angela when asked to give his reason for refusing to carry out instructions. He said she wanted him out of his place on the staff. In the course of time, the issue shifted from his attitude toward work and focused on Angela wanting him to lose his job.

Bulus started meeting some people in their homes and places of work to complain that Angela wanted him to lose his job. Unfortunately, he targeted those he believed had scores to settle with Angela to find easier means of getting support. More and more supporters of Bulus made complaints about Angela until the leadership had to intervene. By the time the intervention came, Bulus and some of the people with whom he spoke had made up their minds that if Angela were not relieved of her job, they would leave the church. When they were asked to talk about the issues precipitating the whole conflict, nothing concrete was said other than, “Bulus said this; Angela said that,” and “Angela said that; Bulus said this.” The panel set up to look into the issue concluded that the conflict was between the two staff members. Although the conflict had nothing to do with the church, those who wanted Angela to leave were not ready to remain in the church

even when they knew the focal point of the conflict focused only between two staff members of the church. At the end of the situation, two families left the church for other churches, and Bulus left to start a new ministry. What began as unwillingness to be supervised by a woman ended as reason for two families to leave the church and the birthing of a new ministry.

In order to avoid the destructive potential of conflict, it has to be resolved. Avoiding the destructive potential of conflict raises the question of conflict resolution. What conflict resolution is and how conflict is resolved are among the issues addressed as the discussion continues. However, before moving on to discuss conflict resolution, I want to talk about the role of Christian leaders in conflict.

The Role of Christian Leaders/Leadership in Conflict

Leaders can possibly be the cause of conflict. Gibbs and Coffey remark, “[L]eaders themselves might be the cause of conflict by allowing themselves to become involved in triangulation or by becoming abusive” (112). The stories of many leaders in history confirm this idea. For the example of Rehoboam, son of Solomon (1 Kings 12) or the former leader of Liberia, Charles Taylor. Both of them were not only the cause of conflict but eventually became the conflict. When Rehoboam became king in the place of Solomon, his father, the nation needed a change in style of leadership. Based on the request of the people, Rehoboam did the right thing by consulting with the elders who served his father. They counseled him to lighten the burden of the people, so they could serve him the way they served his father. He asked for time before giving them feedback. He thereafter consulted with his peers who counseled him to increase rather than reduce the burden of the people. The advice of his peers seemed right to him, but working with

their counsel was the end of a united Israel as the people revolted and followed

Jeroboam:

When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king, “What share do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, O David.” So Israel went away to their tents. (1 Kings 12:16)

Rehoboam thus became the problem of the nation.

From a reading of the Bible, I observed that leaders play one or a combination of the following roles in conflict:

- Being the object of conflict, what the conflict is all about (2 Sam. 3:1). The conflict was between those who maintained allegiance to the house and memory of King Saul and those whose loyalty was to David. The long drawn conflict was about the two leaders even though King Saul was already dead.
- Being the subject of conflict or the focus of what the conflict seeks to defend (1 Kings 12:1-19). The other side of the conflict recorded in this passage revolves around Jeroboam, the man who led the revolt. He was a renegade under Solomon, the father of Rehoboam, and probably when he led the request to ask for a lightening of the burden of the people, he was doing so for himself more than for the people. Whether the people were aware or not, they were trying to defend the course of Jeroboam.
- Being the victim of the conflict or the one who suffers because of the conflict (1 Sam. 30:1-10). The Amalekites had invaded the camp of David and his men, taking away the families as captives and burning their properties. When they came from seeking opportunity for mercenary activity and found what had happened, they turned their anger against David their leader: “David was in great danger; for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in spirit for their sons and daughters. But David

strengthened himself in the LORD his God” (1 Sam. 30:6) even when he became the victim of what happened.

- Being part of the conflict, in which case leadership is involved in the conflict (Acts 15:37-40). Paul and Barnabas, both leaders in their respective right, were parties to the conflict recorded in this passage.

- Being a mediator in the conflict. Leadership was involved in resolving a conflict (1 King 3:16-28). Two women had a conflict over the ownership of a living baby and brought the matter before Solomon the king for resolution, and he resolved it.

Having discussed the role(s) of Christian leaders in conflict, I move on to discussing conflict resolution itself.

Conflict Resolution

Ronald J. Fisher observes the following concerning the subject of conflict resolution:

Conflict resolution refers to the collaborative process by which differences are handled and the outcomes that are jointly agreed to by the parties. As distinct from management, mitigation, or amelioration, conflict resolution involves a transformation of the relationship and situation such that solutions developed by the parties are sustainable and self-correcting in the long term. It also requires that an adequate degree of reconciliation occurs between the parties, in that harmony has been restored through processes such as acknowledgement of transgressions, forgiveness by the victims, and assurances of future peace. (189)

This definition has a few key points worth noting. The first is the fact that conflict resolution is a process. This fact should not be difficult to understand because conflict itself goes through a process. In addition, the collaborative process requires the participation of all stakeholders of the issue(s) in dispute in order for all the parties to agree on the outcomes of the resolution process. The goal of the conflict resolution process is not only the solution to the immediate problem but also the transformation of

relationships such that present outcomes will be sustained and future conflict minimized if not prevented. Conflict resolution requires that parties acknowledge their respective wrongdoings, ask for forgiveness, forgive one another, and promise to do all within their power to make sure that peace reigns thereafter. This process of conflict resolution is what peace and reconciliation is all about.

A Theory of Conflict Resolution

Several factors can influence the outcome of the conflict resolution process depending on the kind of conflict. The factors include power and influence (Blalock), creativity (Gruber), social perception (Yeates, Schultz, and Selman), and personality (Sandy, Boardman, and Deutsch), among others. Researchers have developed theories suggesting that how the parties involved view the conflict resolution process and the focus of the mediator can determine the outcome of the processes. I find the cooperative and competitive model of David W. and Roger T. Johnson a good basic theory for conflict resolution. Johnson and Johnson suggest that the processes of resolving conflict are similar to the processes of problem solving. They can be constructive or destructive. Constructive conflict resolution processes are like cooperative processes of problem solving where conflicts are regarded as mutual problems to be solved cooperatively. Destructive processes of conflict resolution are similar to the processes of competitive problem solving in which the conflict is seen as a competition to be won by one and lost by the other. Usually both sides lose.

Reflecting on the implications of the cooperation-competition theory, Morton Deutsch notes that cooperative orientation greatly facilitates constructive resolution because it will incorporate the social support of others. Incorporating the social support of

others will make it easier to reframe the conflict as a mutual problem to be solved or resolved and encourage the development and use of cooperative behaviors of respect, responsibility, honesty, empowerment, and care toward others (33-36). I believe that the mutual blending of assertiveness with cooperation that the theory suggests will make the outcomes transformative. At the end of the process, the parties will not only respect each other but they will also be in position to chart a new course for future relationships.

For cooperative conflict resolution processes to be successful, the parties must also embrace the same values even when their views are different. Common values that all should embrace include the following: treating others as fellow human beings regardless of gender, race, color or social status; looking at the bigger picture of common Christian or community heritage as the case may be; and, admitting that humans' judgment is fallible. The other values that should be embraced by all include agreeing not to manipulate the process to one's advantage, agreeing to admit to clear error/fault on one's side, seeking to bring glory to God at the end of it all, and praying for one another. Parties to the conflict and the intervener should share these values.

Lester L. Adams opines on the importance of prayer in preparing the heart for conflict resolution:

Jesus makes it clear that dealing with the "deeper issues," those things in our heart that keep us from properly settling our differences with others is essential preparation to help us better resolve our disagreements.... It starts with spending time in prayer to God.

The parties involved in a conflict should be praying for the help of the Lord in resolving their differences and for his will to be done in the matter. Furthermore, they should pray for the person with whom they are at odds (Matt. 5:44-45). Adams remarks further that:

[I]t is hard to stay angry with people that you are praying for. This is true because God softens our hearts as we pray, taking away the anger and resentment we are harboring against those who hurt us. As God does a work in our hearts, it puts us in a position where we are better able to discuss and resolve our differences with the people we are at odds with.

When all the stakeholders pray with sincerity, the hearts will truly be prepared to prefer the well-being of others above that of self (Rom. 12:10).

Elements of Christian Conflict Resolution

As a background to managing conflicts, Rev. Fr. J. C. Atado makes some interesting remarks. The leader

- Should bear in mind that not all conflicts are totally resolvable,
- Should not see his or her inability to resolve a conflict completely as a mark of ineffectiveness,
- Should not take sides or become an adversary in a conflict, and
- Should not try to resolve the conflict if the leader is one of the parties in the dispute (80-81).

Although these steps all sound simple, in practice they can be difficult because of the prejudice of the leader. The fact that a conflict may never be completely resolved is also true. One wonders, for example, if the conflict between King Saul and David was completely resolved before the death of Saul. In the interest of justice and fair play a leader who is a party to a dispute should not try to resolve it except of course if the conflict is simple and requires only an apology and asking for forgiveness to resolve the issue.

I want to suggest strongly that dialogue is an important element of conflict resolution. Dialogue does not necessarily mean compromise though it may be involved,

provided the issue at stake will not mean sacrificing God's principle for human desires. Christian leaders should first be facilitators of the willingness of the parties involved to talk and to listen to each other. The Yoruba people of Nigeria have a saying: "*orọ ki tobitobi kafobe la á, enu laá fisọ* [no matter how big or difficult an issue appears to be, we do not cut it with a knife; we sit still to talk about it]." Even if talking with and listening to the other party does not produce total resolution, such dialogue would clarify some of the misconceptions. Dialogue of this kind, I believe, is what Jesus meant in Matthew 18:15-20 and what happened in Acts 15:1-29 when the early Church needed to resolve the conflict over the circumcision of Gentile believers.

In the kind of dialogue advocated, listening is very vital. As Stott says, "[L]istening is especially important in conflict situations. Whenever there is an industrial dispute, it is almost certain that both sides have a reasonable case.... The essence of conciliation therefore, is to persuade each side to listen to each other" (*Contemporary Christian* 107). His use of the word *persuade* is particularly important because it relates to influencing people. Christian leaders should bear in mind that leadership is primarily about influencing (persuading) people. I want to add that in talking, the people involved should be encouraged to talk to each other about issues and not about each other. Talking about issues and not about one another will foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and the rebuilding of trust.

I must say also that prayer is vital to the "*soul*" of conflict management. The Christian leader can therefore not undermine the place of prayer. Prayer becomes all the more important because Satan is not happy with the whole process of reconciling conflicting parties.

Ken Sande suggests that biblical conflict management is made up of four components: (1) glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:31), which should motivate and direct the process; (2) getting the log out of one's eye (Matt. 7:5) and being willing to own up to one's attitudes, shortcomings, faults, and responsibilities before putting blame on others. (3) going to show a brother or sister his or her fault (Matt. 18:15), which may require constructive confrontation directly or through a third party; and (4) commitment to reconciliation (Matt. 5:24), and restoration of damaged relationships, to complete the conflict management process (10-11).

The willingness of one of the parties to live up to the above components will elicit a similar response from the other party. The stated components can be applied in several ways. The result of conflict resolution is to glorify God and restore relationships.

Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Several approaches to conflict resolution exist depending on the outcome that is expected. Kenneth W. Thomas suggests five basic approaches to managing conflict. The five are based on two primary dimensions of behavior, "assertiveness" (that is the extent to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concern) and "cooperation" (the extent to which a person attempts to satisfy the concern of the other person). With the aid of a two-dimensional model with high and low values on the two behaviors, he defines the five approaches. *Avoidance* (unassertive and uncooperative) is withdrawal from or indifference to the concerns of both parties. *Accommodation* (unassertive and cooperative) is giving in entirely to someone else's concerns without making any efforts to achieve one's own ends, a strategy of appeasement. *Competition* (assertive and uncooperative) reflects a desire to achieve one's own ends at the expense of someone

else. Competition is a win-lose orientation also known as domination. *Compromise* (somewhat assertive and cooperative) as an approach seeks to arrive at a point between domination and appeasement. In compromise, all the parties lose and gain with nobody completely satisfied. *Collaboration* (assertive and cooperative) seeks to integrate the concerns of each of the parties in the effort to satisfy all parties concerned.

Figure 2.1 gives a graphic representation of a two-dimensional approach to the conflict model.

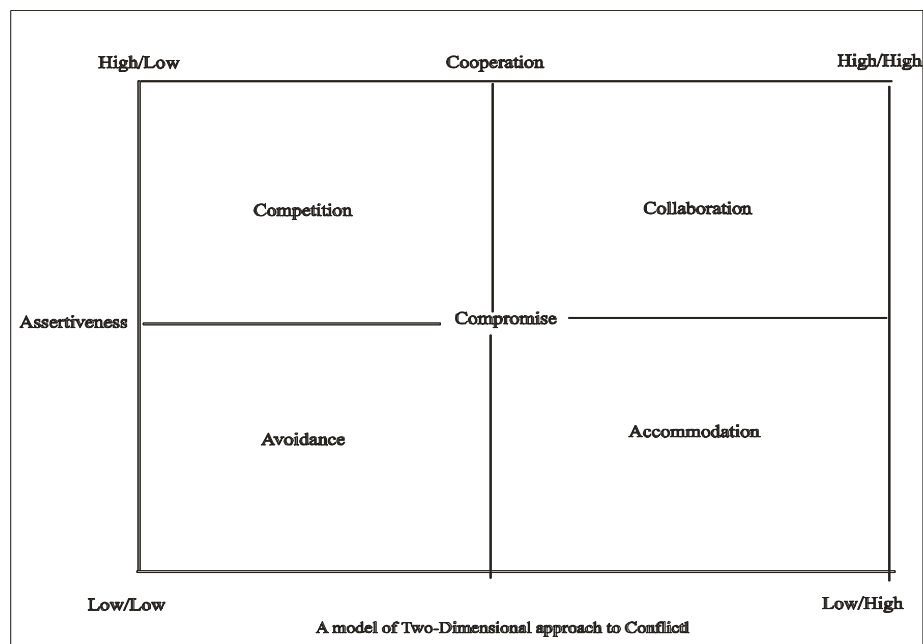


Figure 2.1. Two-dimensional approach to conflict model.

Thomas believes that each of the approaches has its proper place in conflict management. None of the approaches is the right answer to conflict management. My opinion, however, is that aiming for a win-win solution using the collaborative approach should be the goal in any effort to resolving conflict.

Outcomes of Conflict Resolution

One can describe the outcomes of conflict resolution in several ways. Among the ways are satisfaction-satisfaction (win-win), satisfaction-dissatisfaction (win-lose), material benefits and cost (what is gained-what it cost), improvement or worsening of their relationship. Other ways of describing the outcomes of conflict resolution are the effects on self-esteem and reputation, the precedent set, the kinds of lessons learned, or the effects on third parties—say children in the case of divorce or workers in case of folding up a business partnership because of irresolvable conflict (Deutsch 29). The outcome of conflict resolution is rarely accidental. Usually those who mediate in conflict situations have an idea of what they want the outcome to be. In some cases factors that were either not taken into consideration or were underestimated interfere with the processes and affect the desired outcome. At other times, the benefit of hindsight suggests that a different outcome would have been preferred. The following example illustrates how the benefit of hindsight can make mediators think otherwise of their previous approach to solving a conflict.

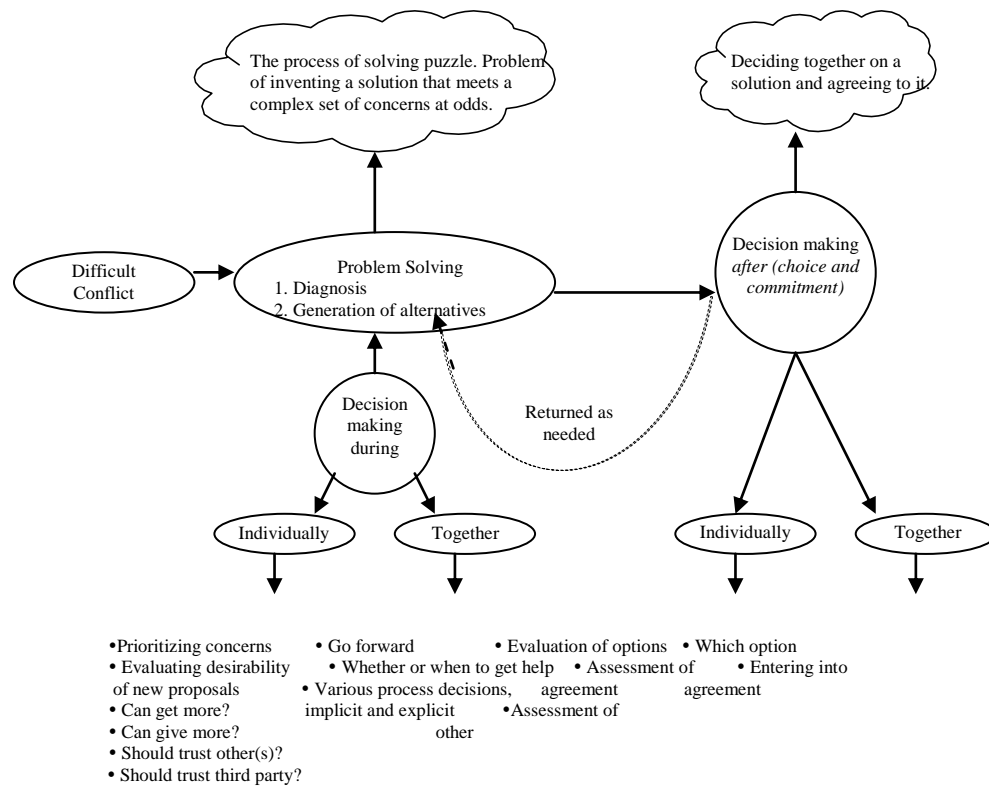
A senior pastor was involved in a conflict with the presiding bishop of the ministry. It was a power struggle between them. The bishop apparently wanted the pastor out of the way but did not know how remove him without dividing the ministry. The pastor initially did not want to leave, preferring to be asked to go. The tension continued to build up until the bishop came up with the idea of transferring the pastor out of the headquarters of the church, which was also the seat of the bishop. The bishop announced to the church that the pastor had volunteered to transfer to plant another branch of the church in another city far away. The announcement solved a part of the bishop's problem.

The target was to get the pastor out of the system and not only out of the headquarters of the church. The next move was to change the policy of the operation of the church especially as it affects those who pastor in the branches. On receiving the new policy, the pastor knew the time had come for him to leave, so he tendered his resignation. For fear of how people would react to the resignation and what the pastor might decide to do, the bishop reported the matter to another bishop who was his mentor. The mentor invited the two with the intention of making sure the pastor left without causing harm to the congregation of the bishop. With the debriefing he had received from his mentoree, he was not prepared to consider what the pastor said. All he wanted to hear was if the pastor would say he wanted to leave. The pastor maintained that he wanted to leave the ministry so the mediating bishop gave his verdict by saying to the pastor, "If you want to go, take your Bible and go."

A few years passed, and the pastor, now leading his own ministry, had occasion to interpret in another language for the bishop who was the mentor. They had occasion to talk about the issue again, and the mentor bishop confessed that he did not give the pastor a fair hearing. He was ready to facilitate the pastor's return back to that ministry, but years had passed and going back was not what the pastor believed God wanted him to do. The point of this story is that as a matter of hindsight, people sometime wished they had handled a situation another way not because their first outcome was accidental but because the whole truth about some issues are better appreciated afterwards. History is better written and read at the end of the experience.

A Model of Conflict Resolution Process

The process of conflict resolution is about solving problems. Conflicts arise because of differences of ideas, values, or preferences that do or may appear incompatible. Sorting these things out requires making decisions personally and collectively. The parties to the conflict make decisions about personal concerns and priority, about what to give and what to accept among others. Collectively, they make a decision on how to process the conflict, whether to involve a mediator or not, and on the outcomes expected among others. Problem solving and decision making are both respectively involved in the process of conflict resolution. The challenge of applying problem solving and decision making as separate strategies for conflict resolution is that they make the processes not only more demanding and complex but also more time consuming. However, by seeing the two as complementary and integrating them together for conflict resolution, mediators make an otherwise complex issue simpler. Eben A. and Patricia Flynn Weitzman propose a model aimed at achieving the integration of the two strategies (see Figure 2.2). The model reflects four general phases: (1) diagnosing the conflict, (2) identifying alternative solutions, (3) evaluating and choosing a mutually acceptable solution, and (4) committing to the decision and implementing it. In the process, before making a final decision, the parties involved may need to go back and generate alternative solutions.



Note: This list of decisions to be made are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive.s
 Source: Weitzman and Weitzman 199.

Figure 2.2. An integrated model of problem solving and decision making in conflict resolution.

Conflict Mediation

From the discussion so far, any of the parties to the conflict can take initiative to start resolution of the conflict as a process and get the other party to come along, so they can together work out their differences without the involvement of a third party. This kind of party-initiated conflict resolution process is the first step that Jesus described in Matthew 18:15. However, as discussed in the levels of conflict, it can grow to a point or phase where as a matter of necessity a third party has to intervene to walk the parties through the processes of working out their differences. The third party either could be a

neutral person to the conflict or partially involved with the conflict. In the former case, the third party is referred to as third party-neutral (Burgess; Honeyman and Yawanarajah; Kressel, “Mediation Revisited” 726) and in the latter case as insider-partial (Wehr and Lederach 56; Maiese). Whether as a third party-neutral or insider-partial, any third party to the conflict resolution process is a mediator⁴ and what he or she does is mediation.

A third party-neutral mediator does not make decisions for the parties but assists them to develop and own the solution to their problem. This mediator is unlike an arbitrator, who listens to both sides and makes a decision for the parties involved in the conflict (see Appendix A). The insider-partial mediator combines mediation with arbitration to the extent that he or she can make decisions for the parties. Although insider-partial mediators are normal in many developing nations, Western nations would regard them as part of a hybrid dispute resolution process (Honeyman). Interestingly, studies have shown that mediators tend to develop a hybrid process of mediation that allows for a greater degree of flexibility and an inclusive approach to mediation (Parker; Davidheiser, “Special Affinities and Conflict Resolution”). By inclusive, I mean an approach that accommodates diversity of people and cultures.

Mediation could be directed either at settling the issues at stake by helping the parties to find a mutually agreeable solution to their immediate dispute, or to empower each of the parties to appreciate their own situation and needs and to recognize the

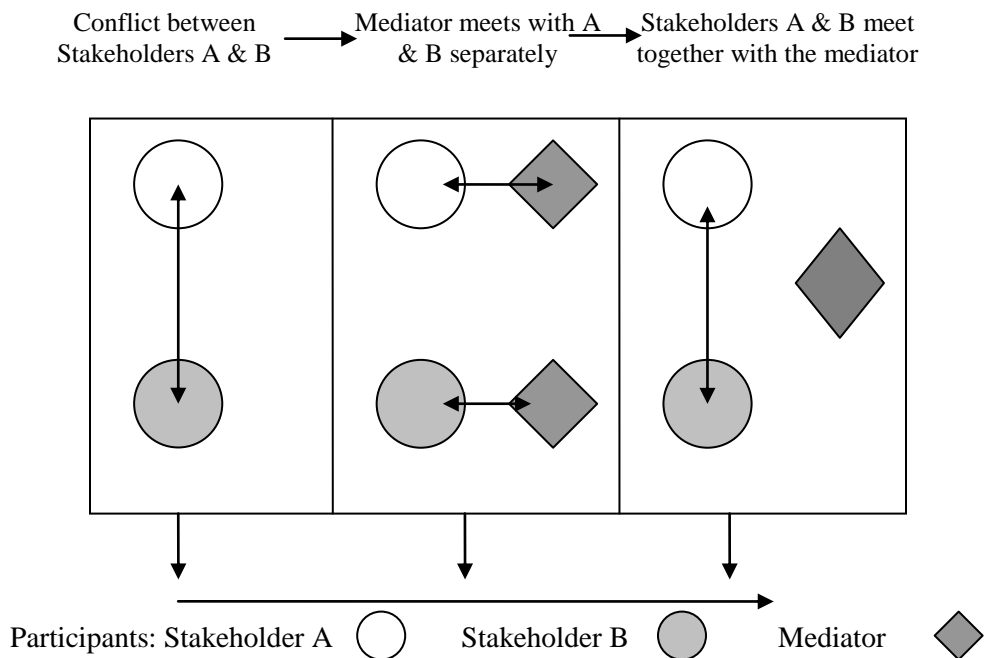
⁴ The third-party neutral is the role mostly played by mediators in the Western nations. The insider-partial is common in many developing nations. “The insider-partial mediator is typically an interested party who emerges from the system of relationships in which the dispute has occurred. This is someone who is known to be sympathetic to one side but trusted by both sides due to personal distinction or institutional prominence” (Maiese). The use of Thabor Mbeki, the former president of South Africa, as a chief mediator in the political dispute in neighboring Zimbabwe is, to a good extent, an example of the insider-partial mediation process at an international level. Mbeki was chosen to be the mediator because he is a well-respected regional leader but apparently sympathetic to Robert Mugabe, one of the parties to the dispute.

situation and needs of the other as a foundation for reaching a mutually agreeable settlement. The former approach to mediation is called problem-solving mediation (Kressel, “Frances Butler” 17-58) and the latter transformative-mediation (Bush and Folger).

Recently Billikopf introduced another model, which he calls party-directed mediation. The model empowers parties to take more responsibility for the resolution of their conflict, which invariably reduces the mediator directiveness of the mediation processes. The model requires “(1) the pre-caucus (where the mediator meets alone with each party before ever bringing both parties together); and (2) the party-directed joint session (where the parties sit facing across from each other and direct their comments to each other rather than to the mediator)” (3).

Figure 2.3 shows how party-directed conflict mediation works. Giving the parties the opportunities to meet individually with the mediator in the precaucus increases the chances that parties will retain much control throughout the mediation process. The parties are the main actors, even during the joint session. Where this approach fails, third party intervention strategies are more likely to be more controlling and directive on the part of the facilitator, often taking on a more quasi-arbitration appearance.

Mediation-based outcome has high stakeholder control over outcome.



Other third party intervention has lower stakeholder control over outcome.

Figure 2.3. Party-directed conflict mediation.

Conflict Mediation Process

The people who have suggested the processes involve in conflict mediation includes Robert A. Baruch Bush and Joseph P. Folger, Kenneth Cloke, Jeffrey Kravis, Christopher W. Moore, Billikopf, Kendall Reed, and David Hurley. The bottom-line as Jim Melamed notes is that “[m]ediation work is so complex, so human, and so fraught with variables that there simply is no linear recipe for success” (ix). Kravis comments on the importance of mediator sensitivity from his experience and those of others:

No two cases are exactly alike, and every moment in a mediation presents an opportunity to prevent an impasse, remove an emotional impediment to negotiation, or move out of deadlock. As the mediator, you make the call: there are no definitive rules, just the opportunity to call on all your skills and improvise in the moment. You’ll draw on your intuition and sense of

timing and on what you've gleaned from personal experience—both from the case and from life itself. (313)

No approach to a conflict resolution is perfect because neither the parties to the conflict nor the third party-neutral (in the case of mediation) brought in to facilitate conflict resolution is perfect. Moreover, what works on one occasion may not work (even for the same parties) on another occasion. My opinion is that so long as a process leads to resolution that will satisfy the parties and bring glory to God it is good enough. This opinion is not to dismiss the need for developing skills and possibly applying multiple theories of conflict resolution. It is rather recognition of the fact that every conflict is unique in its own way. The dynamic and complex nature of human behavior compels one to admit to this uniqueness and hence avoid the temptation of being tied down to one particular approach or theory.

Conflict Resolution/Mediation Skills

Successful conflict resolution or mediation requires more than knowledge of the processes involved in the development of conflict. Developing necessary skills in handling people and leading/directing group decision-making processes are equally important. Deutsch suggests three main kinds referred to as rapport-building skills, cooperative conflict resolution skills, and group process and decision-making skills:

First, there are the skills involved in establishing effective working relationships with each of the conflicting parties and between the conflicting parties if you are the mediator or with the other if you are a participant.... A second, related set of skills concerns developing and maintaining a cooperative conflict resolution process among the parties throughout the conflict.... A third set of skills is involved in developing a creative and productive group problem-solving and decision-making process. (Deutsch 38-39)⁵

⁵ I am aware of research findings on how to develop many of these skills such as R. J. Lewicki, D. J. McAllister, and R. J. Bies and E. C. Tomlinson and R. J. Lewicki on building trust and dealing with

I do not think that people can develop all of these skills at the same time; however, as individuals continue to participate in conflict mediation, they are exposed to more opportunities for developing each of the skills.

Breaking the ice, reducing fears and tensions, and creating the atmosphere for success are part of the first set of skills. The second set of skills includes the ability to identify the type of conflict, reframing the issues involved so the parties can see them from a more positive perspective, identifying shared values and cultural competence, and controlling anger. The third set of skills includes those normally required for solving problems and making decisions, such as the ability to clarify issues, identify alternative options, make a choice, and implement decisions.

The first set of skills comes to use before dialogue begins while the other two are helpful in the process of discussions with the third, which is especially important in helping to arrive at a solution. As experience grows in handling conflict resolution or mediation, people will discover that the skills become so much a part of themselves that the needed skill at any point is put to use without them being conscious of using it. Although the skills are universal, their application in different situations has to be contextually and culturally sensitive. Sensitivity is important because people come to the table with some cultural experience of dealing with conflict and conflict resolution at one level or another from their childhood.

My observation is that throughout the application of these skills the ability to continue to change one's perspective of the conflict and its resolution is very important

because as the parties try to resolve a conflict, what each one thinks and how each one thinks affects the progress that would be made. When a particular paradigm of thinking would not lead to progress, I find that shifting the way of thinking leads to progress. For example in a conflict between couples, usually the parties first think in terms of gender rights as a man or as a woman. If that way of thinking would not encourage progress, they begin to think as a husband or wife. If that way of thinking brings the desired progress, the parties are happy, but if not, they shift their thinking again. The parties now begin to think in terms of parental roles. They think more like a father or a mother. If thinking in terms of family relationship will still not move the process forward, thinking in terms of their common humanity become the next step in thinking for parties in conflict. This type of thinking requires expecting from others what one requires of oneself. Next to thinking as fellow human beings is thinking like Christians. Shifting thoughts in this way helps the parties and the mediator to make progress in conflict resolution because it hinges the resolution process on relationship and mutual values shared by the parties.

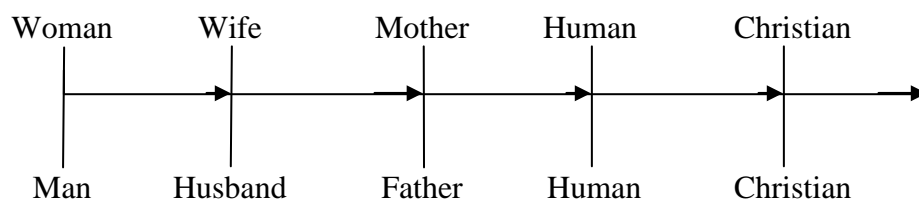


Figure 2.4. Spectrum of relational thought in conflict resolution.

The sense of relationship and the sense of objectivity may however be confused during conflict. When such a mix-up takes place, it usually can lead to handling issues more sentimentally with lack of objectivity. The challenge of possibly confusing the

sense of relationship with the sense of being objective in the process of conflict resolution can be overcome when the parties work through the conflict resolution process on the premise of mutual respect and their common values. Working with mutual respect and shared values, the parties have what to use in defining objectivity in the circumstance. Whether parties to a conflict are thinking as fellow human beings or as fellow Christians, their shared value would define for them a sense of objectivity as they work through the processes of conflict resolution.

Summary

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of conflict and conflict resolution. The chapter shows that what usually becomes a conflict is not the result of an event but the consequences of a process. Whenever interference occurs in the values and goals of people who are relationally connected, the stage for conflict is set. As the interference moves towards the level of intolerance, the relationship also moves through different phases towards a full-blown conflict situation. The final level of the resulting conflict depends on what each of the parties considers at stake and what they have respectively invested in the process leading to the conflict.

The chapter shows that conflict resolution is not an event but a process that the parties to the conflict can agree to initiate and work through to complete. In the alternative, they may require a third party to facilitate a resolution or arbitrate between them. Conflict resolution is about realigning values, goals, and relationships.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Gibbs and Coffey underscore the inevitability of conflict when they say, “One cannot have community without conflict. This is as true in the church as in any area of life” (112). Conflict “is [also] an inevitable fact of life and an inevitable fact of leadership” (Hughes, Ginnett, Curphy 486). Leaders have as one of their responsibilities mediating in conflict. Leaders can and should do their best to resolve conflicts like every other human problem. The issue, however, is what leaders bring along with them into the mediation process. Chapter 2 of this work shows that culture is part of conflict and conflict resolution. It also notes that cultural values not only influence the way leaders think but also color their approach to conflict mediation. The first problem is finding out how cultural coloration influences the approach of Christian leaders to conflict mediation. The second problem is finding out how Christian leaders can be more biblical in their approach to conflict mediation in light of possible bias due to cultural coloration. This study sought answer to these primary problems.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research was to describe the phenomenon of cultural coloration and its influence on African Christian leaders in Jos, Nigeria, and the resulting impact on conflict resolution.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of the investigation.

Research Question #1

What elements of cultural coloration interfere with or affect biblical principles in the process of conflict resolution? The purpose of this question was to discover element(s) of culture that have the highest potential to color the approach of mediators in the process of handling conflict. Knowing the element(s) of culture is pertinent because as Christian leaders in their cultural context, they are to remain Christians and to remain relevant to the society outside the community of faith. Their ability to grapple with issues of cultural values in the light of their faith will certainly enhance their leadership credentials in the wider society.

Research Question #2

How do the cultural coloration elements affect the approach of leaders to conflict resolution? Because conflict mediation is an inevitable part of leadership, the second research question helped discover how the cultural elements identified from the first question colors the approach of leaders and interfere with biblical principles of conflict resolution.

Project Description

The investigation was done using a mixed quantitative-qualitative research approach (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 14; Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, and Rupert 19; Sandelowski 246). The research used stratified random samples of people represented within the Christian community. Data was collected using sequential mixed methods (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, and Rupert 21). The first sequence involved the use of Likert-scale designed questions to discover how participants perceived the impact of the various cultural values on their approach to life in general. The result of the Likert scale

enabled the determination of the cultural values to examine in detail, relative to how such cultural values color the approach to conflict resolution. Upon identifying a particular cultural value as having the highest potential to color the approach to conflict resolution, I used an open-ended questionnaire to find out how participants perceived and approached conflict resolution in light of the particular cultural element. The questionnaire sought to find out what Christian leaders need in terms of knowledge and skills to enable them to be more biblical in the process of conflict resolution. The research questions guided the questionnaire.

The study viewed the phenomenon comprehensively. The conduct of the research was in a natural and normal context of the participants in order to ensure that they were free and open to express their respective opinions. The perception of participants was captured carefully, knowing that such perceptions formed the basis of measuring the phenomena under study. As someone from the same context with the participants, I took extra care not to allow my prior assumptions and conclusions about the phenomena to interfere with the perception of the participants (Wiersma and Jurs 201-02). All through the process, as the researcher, I remained open to the possibility that the perception and variables that emerged may be different from those that I envisaged from the beginning of the study (Britten).

The geographical focus of the project was Jos, a city in the central part of Nigeria, and the study took six months to complete.

Participants

The city of Jos and its immediate surroundings have approximately 135 church denominations and about sixty-five parachurch organizations. The majority of these

establishments are multicultural in their membership makeup. These organizations have both male and female leaders from various tribes and subcultures. The participants for this study were selected male and female Christian leaders, all of which were from a cross section of the Christian community in Jos.

The denominations and parachurch organizations were the population used for the study. This population was in appreciation of the fact that leaders provide leadership in the context of their respective organizations especially more so during conflict resolution . Moreover, determining the total number of leader in all of these churches was cumbersome partly because of the variety of church polity that invariably influences church structure and the number and way of appointing/recognizing/electing leaders. Another reason is that the more indigenous churches such as Cherubim and Seraphim church have leadership structure that tries to combine the Old Testament temple leadership form with the leadership gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. For example, the Cherubim and Seraphim church have leaders with the title of apostle, senior apostle, and special apostle.

Another key issue about determining the total population of leaders is that what is applicable in the case of the churches is not the same in the case of nonchurch-based Christian organizations. For example a seminary has different levels of leaders. In addition to administrative leaders, every teacher/instructor/professor is a leader in his or her own right. The entire teacher in the seminaries in Jos could constitute a population for another research.

Notwithstanding these challenges, however, I observed that in the context of the study, most churches have at least three leadership offices. These are the pastoral leader,

women leaders, and men leaders. I am not saying these are the only leaders in any church, but in addition to all other forms of leadership types, these will normally be present. Moreover, even when other types of leadership forms are absent, these would exist. Consequently, the people interviewed were those presently occupying leadership roles. In the case of the nonchurch organizations, I interviewed people in top administrative positions.⁶ The respective participants were drawn from organizations randomly selected from the pool of the denominations and parachurch organizations.

Twenty-two people (men and women) representing about 10 percent of the target population were involved as participants for the project.⁷ The minimum age for participating was 35, years, and the people who participated were from the three major tribes in Nigeria: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, respectively. The cultural particularities of these languages made the research findings to be cross-cultural in orientation and the findings to have transferable application in similar settings.

Participation came from a stratified random sample of the target population comprised of fifteen men and seven women. I chose more men because ordinarily in African society, people regard leadership as the responsibility of men. One implication of regarding leadership as the role of men is that men are in contact with more situations of conflict and conflict resolution than women are. Each of the participants had a minimum of five years experience in leadership roles. The minimum age chosen was 35 because

⁶ I want to say that this option did not completely resolve the case for the number of leaders in all the population because in the different churches and nonchurch organizations the number of people assigned for leadership is not the same everywhere. I worked with the basic understanding that a normal church setting had a pastor (who in most cases was a man), a men's leader, and a women's leader as a minimum arrangement for leadership.

⁷ Taking a sample of 10 percent of the population (two hundred), the sample of leaders to interview will be twenty leaders. However, in order to account for possible margin of error, in consultation with my advisor, I chose twenty-two leaders for the research survey.

people are generally considered fully matured and experienced enough to take up any form of leadership responsibility, which expectedly includes conflict mediation at that age. Selection of participants was purposive and done in such a way that cut across culture, denominations, and nonchurch-based Christian ministries.

Gender lines guided the selection of participants. The study used the overall population of the churches and nonchurch organizations in the city as the pool from which the participants were drawn. From a participatory observation of the pattern of the percentage of women to men in Christian leadership positions in the city, I used an intuitive ratio of 30 percent women to 70 percent men to determine the sample.⁸ Working with this ratio to find the participants required for the study, I devised the following equation:

$$30/100 \times 22 = 6.6 \text{ women}$$

$$70/100 \times 22 = 15.4 \text{ men.}$$

Because human beings have no fraction, and in order to err on the side of caution, I added one person to the female category and left the males at fifteen persons. The participants, therefore, totaled seven women and fifteen men.

Having established the number of female and male participants needed, every church and organization had equal chance for representation. Random selection was made in two parts and four steps. The first step in the first part chose twenty-two organizations from a hat containing the list of the target population. The second step in that first part put the twenty-two organizations from the first step in a hat and randomly select seven out of the twenty-two to indicate the organizations from which the female

⁸ This ratio is apparent, remembering that in most churches the pastors are male. With some women leaders and men leaders, the ratio is estimated at one woman to two men.

participants came. The second part, consisting of another two steps, was a repeat of the processes of the first part except that in this case, the selection involved fifteen out of twenty-two organizations. The fifteen represented the places from which the fifteen male participants came. I used the hat process for picking out the seven from among the first twenty-two.

Given the various strata of leadership in most churches and Christian organizations, I chose to interview pastors, the leaders of men, and leaders of women groups respectively. In the case of nonchurch-based organizations, I targeted the top leaders or their deputies. This way I was sure to get the audience of at least one out of three key leaders in the case of churches and one out of two top leaders in the case of nonchurch-based organizations.

I identified the respective participants based on recommendation of the most senior officer, in the case of parachurch organizations, and recommendation of the senior pastor, in the case of churches, especially when the most senior officer or the senior pastor is not available or when I have to interview a woman leader in the church. I contacted the most senior officers or senior pastors first by phone in order to book an appointment to meet with him or her. After confirmation to meet, I went with the letter of introduction from my research reflection team (see appendix C) to meet with the officer. Upon my meeting each one of them, I discussed the purpose and benefits of the study, responding to whatever question or concern he or she expressed. In some of the cases, the person I met was the person to interview, and in some other cases, he or she steered me to the person that stood out as strong in conflict mediation. In some cases, I had the interview done on the first appointment; in other cases, I made several trips before the

interview was completed. Overall, I assured participants of the confidentiality of their responses (Britten).

Instrumentation

The first sequence of the research involved the use of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The use of this instrument enabled me to delineate and identify an overriding and, hence, representative cultural coloration value that would become the focus of further examination in the next sequence of the study. The other instrument was a semi-structured interview carried out with the aid of open-ended questions. The most prevalent value discovered in the first sequence shaped the questions. In conducting the interviews, I carefully followed the guidelines of Nancy Fichtman Dana, Thomas M. Dana, Karla Lynn Kelsay, Deborah Thomas, and Deborah J. Tippins. The guidelines require that the questions should be deliberately short and precise, ask only one question at a time, avoid questions in which the answer is either given or implied, be mindful of interviewees use of language, and avoid why questions. I was careful of how directive I was as I conducted the interviews, “[w]hether leading questions are being asked, whether cues are picked up or ignored, and whether interviewees were given enough time to explain what they mean” (Britten). As much as I took care not to direct the interview, I also made an effort not to lose control of the process either. Michael Quinn Patton opines that in order to maintain control, interviewers should keep in mind what they want to find out, ask the right questions to get the information needed, and give appropriate verbal and nonverbal feedback (108-43). In addition, I was aware of and did my best to make sure that the place of interview was private enough with no outside interruptions, competing distractions, stage fright, awkward questions. I was also careful of the possibility of

jumping from one subject to another and of preempting or counseling the interviewee (True 208). In all, I endeavored to maintain a balance between being in control of the interview and placing undue pressure on the interviewees, so they kept on track and remained free to discuss their views. The samples of the Likert scale used for the cultural value test and the interview questions used for the one-on-one interviews are in Appendixes E and F respectively.

Variables

Gender is one of the key variables that may affect the outcome of the study. The issue is whether people of different genders from the same culture approach conflict mediation in the same way or not. The age of participants is also a factor that may affect the outcome of the study. The issue is whether age affects the way people perceive conflict and handle conflict resolution. The number of years since a person became a believer, and has been serving in leadership may also be an additional variable and so is the kind of training an individual has had. Training and the level of Christian maturity can have strong impact on how a person views conflict and approaches conflict resolution.

Data Collection

Data collection was interactive (Wiersma and Jurs 204; Hancock 9) and done through interview on a face-to-face basis using a tape recorder. In addition to recording the interviews, I also took written notes of salient points and of observations made during each interview. A series of open-ended, neutral, sensitive, and clear questions were prepared using a semi-structured protocol (Seidman 70; Hancock 9; Patton 108-43). The questions' design allowed respondents to describe, in their own words, how their cultural

biases sneak into and interfere with the process of conflict mediation. The open-ended nature of the questions helped define the topic under investigation and provided opportunities for both the researcher and respondents to discuss some topics in more detail (Britten). It also provided me opportunity to use prompts to encourage the respondents to consider the questions further. The interview guiding questions were developed only after identifying (through a thorough review of relevant literature) cultural components that were capable of intervening in the conflict mediation process after due consultation with my mentor and the research reflection team.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

After recording the interviews, a paid secretary transcribed the recorded interviews first into notebooks and then in digital form using Microsoft Office Word 2003 files. Written notes from the respective interviews were also stored in digital form using Microsoft Word files. I kept all the data collected organizationally and by topic of the factors identified. The manner of keeping the data allowed easy retrieval and processing of the data.

I carefully analyzed and discussed the results of the one-on-one interviews. Thereafter, I discussed and described how conflict resolution can be made more biblical in the light of cultural coloration. I carried out the procedure of organizing and analyzing the data through content analysis and data reduction. I started with the search for patterns of thinking or behavior, words, phrases, or other noteworthy recurring responses. I coded such phenomena by repeatedly visiting the data and reviewing the labeling of data until I was sure that the themes and categories used to summarize and describe the findings were an honest and accurate reflection of the data relevant to the phenomenon under study

(Hancock 18; Genzok; Wiersma and Jurs 207). In coding the content of each of the transcribed interviews, notions related to conflict in general were coded cfg; the ones related to conflict resolution strategy were coded crs. Ideas related to cultural coloration were coded cuc, and those related to research question #1 were coded rq1. For impressions related to research question #2, the code was rq2, and notions of regrets about mismanaged conflicts were coded mcr. Ideas related to what the interviewee would change or do better in future conflict resolution were coded bcr.

Once I captured all the significant ideas, I used tables to collate recurring ideas in order to discover emerging themes. Thereafter, I carefully studied the themes to discover their points of continuity and points of discontinuity. After this, I assigned possible interpretations and meanings before writing a description of what the findings show about the phenomenon under study.

Ethical Procedures

I am aware that the study is not only an academic work but also a moral and ethical exercise. Consequently due diligence was taken to approach data collection with pastoral sensitivity and respect for the participants. I obtained voluntary verbal consent of participants with care after explaining to each person what the study sought to achieve. Consent was not obtained formally by using consent forms but through formal and informal conversation. This approach is because the use of consent forms may raise the suspicion that the study may be seeking to achieve more than what I had explained to them. However, as a proof of consent to participate in the study, I made a provision for participant to append their respective signature at the end of consent to participate note.

The context of the interview was interactive, and participants gave information without coercion. I explored and took advantage of the relationship of mutual trust and respect existing among Christian leaders in the city of Jos. Notwithstanding the mutual trust, the confidentiality of the information given by participants was assured and that of the anonymity of their identity and the institution they represent in the analysis and presentation of the report. I promise to give a feedback of the outcome of the study to those who indicated their interest in knowing it.

I assume responsibility for the protection of the data in both digital and hard copy forms respectively. I used a portable and external hard drive to store the respective voice and computer type written digital data, and a hard cover file jacket with double ring binder for hard copy storage. I kept them properly and safely except for auditing and other purposes considered relevant for replications and the furtherance of knowledge.

Summary

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for investigating the phenomenon under inquiry. The chapter also discussed the mixed method sequential approach used for collecting data and the instruments used. The chapter discusses the care taken to ensure proper collation and storage of data from the target group. The chapter further introduced the approach used for data analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

In this chapter, I present a summary of the problem and purpose of the study and the basic characteristics of the participants. This explanation is followed by a tabular and descriptive presentation and analysis of the data collected.

Conflicts are inevitable in any community of people and so is the need to resolve them. Leaders, more than other members of the community, have the responsibility of conflict resolution laid on their shoulders. As much as parties to any conflict expect leaders to be objective in their approach to conflict resolution, no leader comes to the mediating table from a cultural vacuum. Cultural values influence the way leaders (in general terms) see conflict and approach conflict resolution. One of the consequences of this influence is cultural coloration of the way leaders approach conflict resolution. This idea of cultural coloration is a problem because of the possibility of blind spots in their approach. The problem assumes a greater dimension when conflict has to be resolved between parties from very different cultural backgrounds.

The purpose of this research was to explain the phenomenon of cultural coloration and its influence on African Christian leaders in Jos, Nigeria, and the consequential impact on conflict resolution.

Two questions guided the enquiry for the study. First, what elements of cultural coloration interfere with or affect biblical principles in the process of conflict resolution? Second, how do the cultural coloration element(s) affect the approach of leaders to conflict resolution?

For the purpose of the study, African Christian leaders from different cultural and denominational background in Jos, central Nigeria, were interviewed using a mixed research method. The quantitative aspect of the interview comprised the use of a five-point Likert scale designed to assess the strength of the influence of African cultural value on the participants. The qualitative segment of the research involved a semi-structured open-ended interview of the respective participants.

Because I used mixed methods in carrying out the research, the result is presented in quantitative and qualitative terms respectively. I used data from the former to answer RQ1, and data from the latter is used to respond to RQ2.

Participants

The participants for the research were male and female African Christian leaders drawn from different cultural and denominational backgrounds. Their leadership roles include men's leadership, women's leadership, pastoral leadership, seminary teaching, and Bible translation. The twenty-two participants emerged consequent of random selection of the churches and nonchurch organizations where they are serving as leaders. Table 4.1 shows the relevant profile of the participants.

Table 4.1. Profile of Participants

Participant/ Respondent	Leadership Assignment	Years in Leadership Role	Age	Gender	Organization Represented
1	Church planter	7	45	M	Local church
2	Founding leader	15	73	F	Nonchurch-based ministry
3	Founding leader	15	65	F	Nonchurch (women's ministry)
4	Sr. pastor	10	40	M	Church based
5	District pastor	>20	52	M	Church denomination
6	Men fellowship leader	Six	42	M	Church-based men's group
7	Women's leader	Just over 5 yrs	41	F	Interdenominational worship chapel
8	Regional senior pastor	>5	54	M	Church denomination
9	Women leader	>10	39	F	Church denomination
10	CEO	10	46	M	Non church (faith- based hospital)
11	Women leader	5	43	F	Church denomination
12	Pastor	15	44	M	Church
13	Director of administration	8	46	M	Non church (Bible translation)
14	Women leader	10	55	F	Church
15	Director	17	46	F	Non church
16	Pastor	12	37	M	Church
17	Pastor	15	40	M	Church
18	Administrator	10	45	M	Non church ministry
19	Bible school provost	10	40	M	Non Church (Bible School)
20	Seminar instructor	8	47	M	Non Church (seminary)
21	Missions coordinator	7	56	M	Non-Church (rural missions)
22	Sr. pastor	12	45	M	Church

The average age of participants was 47.3 years and the average years of their being in leadership roles was 11.3 years. Seven of them were women (average age 51.7 years; average years in leadership roles eleven years) and fifteen were men (average age 45.3 years; average years in leadership roles 11.3 years). At the time of the study, thirteen of them were serving as leaders in church settings as pastors, men, and women leaders respectively. The remaining nine were serving in various parachurch organizations. All of them were Africans in origin and Christians by profession of faith.

Research Question #1

What elements of cultural coloration interfere with or affect biblical principles in the process of conflict resolution? This question sought element(s) of cultural values that have the highest potential to color the approach of mediators in the process of handling conflict. Knowledge of these element(s) will enable leaders to be intentional as they seek to be more biblical in approaching conflict and conflict resolution within the community of faith and in the larger society.

Because the purpose of this question was to discover element(s) of the culture that have the highest potential to color the approach of African Christian leaders as mediators in the process of conflict resolution, Table 4.2 shows the perception of participants on the various African cultural values. Table 4.2 summarizes the results of the Likert scale instrument used to measure the perception of participants on the cultural value(s) that generally influence their respective approach to life in general terms.

A careful look at Table 4.2 reveals a few noteworthy patterns. Respondents 5, 13, and 14 have similar patterns in number of disagreement on values for feast, life, and community life respectively. Respondents 13 and 14 have virtually the same pattern in

the numbers of agree and disagree with only two exceptions: First, their strongest value is not the same; second, they differ on their value for religion.

Respondents 12 and 17 have similar numbers for agree and strongly agree. They differ only on value 1. Respondent 21 has a similar pattern for agree with respondents 12 and 17 except on the value for life where he differs in opinion. Value for religion is the only point of different in the number of agree and/or strongly responses for respondents 4 and 12.

Respondent 5 has the highest number of disagree and strongly disagree opinions. Although respondents 1, 12, and 21 all have equal number of agree and/or strongly agree opinions, respondent 21 differs with the other two on the value for the sacred and the value for life respectively.

Looking at further patterns, only respondents 17 and 21 agree and/or strongly agree with the value for the sacred. Respondent 16 is the only one who disagrees with value of respect for elders. The value for religion has the highest number of no opinion ratings. Respondents 5 and 15 were the only two who disagree with the value for harmonious relationships. Having a value for the weak is the only question with which all respondents either agree or strongly agree.

Table 4.2. Response of Participants to Likert-Scale Rating of African Cultural Values

Respondent Gender & #	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4	Value 5	Value 6	Value 7	Value 8	Value 9
M1	SD	SA	A	SA	A	A	*SA	SA	SA
F2	D	SA	SA	SA	A	A	*SA	SA	A
F3	D	A	A	A	SA	SD	SA	*SA	A
M4	D	A	D	A	A	*A	A	A	A
M5	D	SA	D	SD	SD	D	D	*SA	NP
M6	D	SA	A	NP	SD	SA	*SA	SA	A
F7	D	SA	A	A	A	A	*SA	A	NP
M8	D	*SA	SA	D	SA	A	SA	SA	SA
F9	D	*SA	A	A	A	D	A	A	A
M10	D	*SA	NP	NP	D	A	A	A	D
F11	D	SA	NP	SD	SD	A	*SA	SA	SA
M12	D	SA	A	A	*SA	A	SA	SA	A
M13	D	*SA	NP	D	D	D	A	A	A
F14	D	A	A	D	D	D	*SA	A	A
F15	D	SA	NP	*SA	A	A	D	SA	A
M16	D	SD	D	D	D	A	*SA	SA	A
M17	A	*SA	A	A	A	A	SA	SA	SA
M18	D	SA	A	D	D	A	A	*SA	SA
M19	D	SA	NP	A	A	A	A	A	*SA
M20	SD	SA	A	SD	SD	A	*SA	SA	A
M21	*SA	SA	SA	A	D	A	A	A	A
M22	D	*SA	A	A	A	A	SA	A	D

Cultural Values: 1.Value for the sacred, 2. Value for elders, 3. Value for religion, 4. Value for feasts and rituals, 5. Value for life, 6. Value for community life, 7. Value for harmonious relationships, 8. Value for the weak, 9. Value for land

* Individual respondent's strongest cultural value

Key to scores: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NP=No opinion, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

In order to track the pattern and the prevalent rate of endorsement of the cultural values, Table 4.3 shows the frequency of occurrence of the values by percentage.

Table 4.3. Summary of Participants' Endorsement of Influence of Cultural Values

African Cultural value	% Frequency of occurrences				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Value for the sacred	4.5	4.5		81.9	9.1
Value for elders	81.9	13.6			4.5
Value for religion	13.6	50.1	22.7	13.6	
Value for feasts and rituals	13.6	41	9.1	22.7	13.6
Value for life	13.6	41		27.3	18.1
Value for community life	4.5	72.8		18.2	4.5
Value for harmonious relationships	59.1	31.8		9.1	
Value for the weak	59.1	40.9			
Value for land	27.3	54.5	9.1	9.1	

As noted earlier, the scoring table allowed for five possible responses to each of the cultural statement. For the purpose of this study, I am focusing on agree and strongly agree responses to locate prevalent cultural value(s). I will consider a cultural value to have a significant potential to influence the life of the respondents and possibly color their approach to conflict resolution if it scores 75 percent or more as a sum of agree and strongly agree responses. I consider 75 percent reasonable for rating the influence of a phenomenon on a person's life. In term of time, saying that a cultural value influences a person 75 percent of the time is high. In the following paragraph, I will discuss table 4.3 and support it with a figure to show the endorsement of each of the cultural values

Table 4.3 shows that 81.9 percent of the respondent strongly agreed that respect for elders and people older than themselves influence their approach to life in general and, invariably, their approach to conflict and conflict resolution. An equal percentile of 59.15 percent strongly agree that the cultural values for harmonious relationships, and

concern for the weak, sick, and elderly influence their outlook to life. Totaling the figures for agree and strongly agree responses for each of these values indicated that the value of respect for elders was 95.5 percent; the value for harmonious living was 90.9 percent; and, the value for the weak was 100 percent. However, given the strongly agree rating for the value for elders; this value clearly is the most significant, followed by the value for the weak and harmonious living respectively.

The sum of agree and strongly agree responses for the value for land was 81.8 percent, while the value for community life was 77.3 percent. The value for feasts and rituals and the value for life both have totaled 54.6 percent as the sum of agree and strongly agree responses. When combined, the sum of agree and strongly agree responses for the value for religion was 63.7 percent.

On the down side, the majority of the respondents disagreed with the African cultural value that everywhere is sacred ground. On this value, respondents scored 91 percent disagree and strongly disagree. Only a combined figure of 9 percent agreed that the value for the sacred influence their approach to life. Comparing the cultural value of respect for elders and the value for the sacred, both share the same 81.9 percent response but on opposite ends of the scale.

Pictorially, the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses for all the values are shown in Figure 4.1.

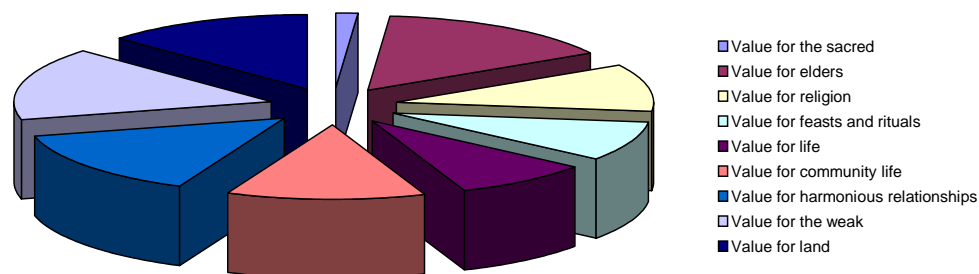


Figure 4.1. Participants' endorsement of the influence of African cultural values (combined a and sa).

The numbers from Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1 indicate that although each of the cultural values has a degree of potential to influence the lives of the respondents, the value of respect for elders, the value for the weak, and the value for harmonious living are the top three cultural values with such potential. Whereas the value of respect for elders has the highest rating with 81.9 percent responses in the strongly agree column, the value for the weak did not have any *disagree* scores. The 59.1 percent common to the value for the weak and the value for harmonious living in the strongly agree column suggests that the latter value is comparable in the degree of potency with the former value.

In addition to the top three values, the value for land and the value for community life also suggest a significant degree of potential for influencing the lives of respondents

and possibly for coloring their approach to conflict resolution. The five cultural values each scored more than 75 percent to meet my criterion for being the cultural values with the highest potential to influence and possibly color the approach of African Christian leaders to conflict resolution.

The pattern of *disagree* responses reflects how respondents consider each of these values less significant in terms of respective influence over their lives. Figure 4.2 shows the strongly disagree and disagree responses. The value of respect for elders and the value for the weak are each represented with a line because they each had insignificant disagree values.

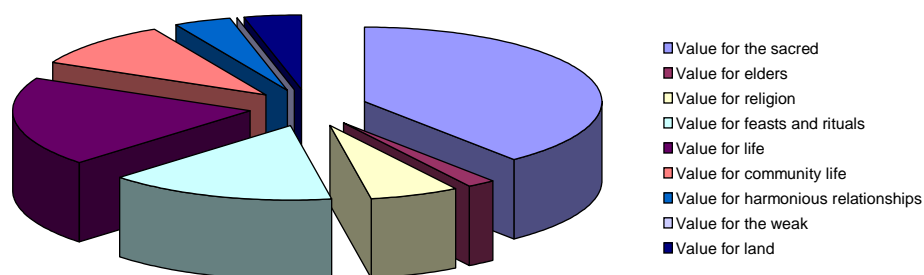


Figure 4.2. Combined disagree and strongly disagree responses to the influence of African cultural values.

Because the study was based on a stratified sample of female and male leaders, I think isolating the data along gender lines may shed light on the pattern and possibly on

the dynamics of how the cultural values affect African Christian leaders. Table 4.4 shows responses for female respondents, and Table 4.6 presents a comparison of female and male responses.

Table 4.4 shows that 100 percent of female respondents endorse the value of respect for elders and the value for the weak in that order. The figures for the latter agree with responses from Table 4.3 except for the value for elders, which showed a slight change (0.5 percent). This slight change is apparently because no female respondent disagrees with the value of respect for elders. The value for harmonious relationships and the value for land each had 85.7 percent for the sum of agree and strongly agree responses. This figure is against the respective 90.0 percent and 81.8 percent in the same columns from Table 4.3.

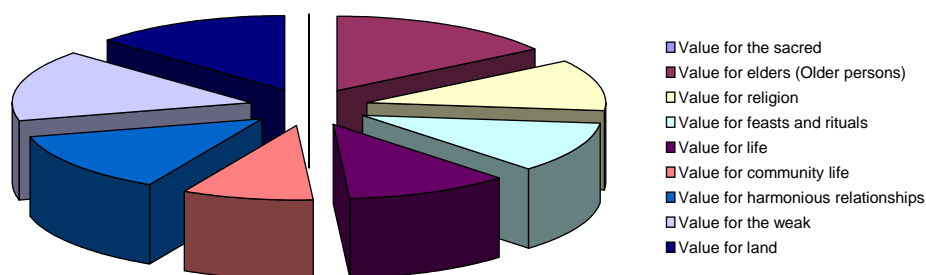
The value for religion, the value for life, and the value for community life each had 71.4 percent on the sum of agree and strongly agree responses. This pattern is close to but not the same as the responses from Table 4.3, especially concerning the value for religion, which had the sum of 63.7 percent. The value for community life did not have any strongly agree responses from female participants. Comparing the 57.1 percent, response to the general endorsement (77.3 percent) for this value suggests that overall women highly value community life. Women's value for community life compared with men's opinion for the same value is shown in Table 4.6.

Female respondents expressed an opinion on the majority of the cultural values. The only values for which they expressed no opinion were the value for religion and the value for land. Those participants may be preferred to choose the no opinion response instead of a clear response of disagree.

Table 4.4. Summary of Female Participants' Endorsement of Influence of Cultural Values

African Cultural Value	% Frequency of Occurrences of Female Participants				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Value for the sacred				100	
Value for elders (older persons)	71.4	28.6			
Value for religion	14.3	57.1	28.6		
Value for feasts and rituals	28.6	42.8		14.3	14.3
Value for life	14.3	57.1		14.3	14.3
Value for community life		57.1		28.6	14.3
Value for harmonious relationships	71.4	14.3		14.3	
Value for the weak	57.1	42.9			
Value for land	14.3	71.4	14.3		

The pattern of female participants' endorsement of African cultural values is shown in Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3. Female participant's endorsement of African cultural values (combined a and sa).**

When the endorsement of African cultural values by female participants is subjected to the 75 percent criterion of determining the prevalent influence of a cultural value, the value of respect for elders, the value of concern for the weak, the value for harmonious relationships, and the value for land all met the criterion for prevalence from female participants. Comparing this result to the result from table 4.3, only the value for community life did not meet the criterion for prevalence from the female responses. All female respondents (100 percent) disagreed with the value for the sacred. None of the values that the women saw as clearly prevalent had disagree responses. My conjecture is that female respondents chose a no opinion response rather than a disagree response. With a combined figure of 42.9 percent, the value for community life has the next highest disagree response from female respondents. The value for harmonious relationships has a 14.3 percent disagree response, which is the lowest.

Figure 4.4 shows the combined disagree and strongly disagree responses of the female respondents. The open gap that clearly separates the segment of the value for the sacred represents the space for the values of respect for elders and the value for land, both of which do not have any disagree response from female respondents.

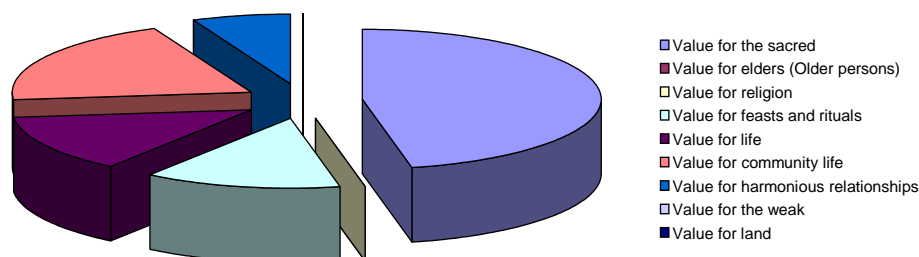


Figure 4.4. Combined Disagree and Strongly Disagree Responses of Female Participants to the Influence of African Cultural Values

Considering male endorsement alone and based on the sum of agree and strongly agree responses, Table 4.5 shows that the value of concern for the weak, the sick, and the elderly scored 100 percent, indicating that all the male respondents agree or strongly agree with the value. The score is the same as for the combined group. The value of respect for elders and the value for harmonious relationships had 93.3 percent respectively. This number compares to 95.5 percent for the value of respect for elders and 90.9 percent for the value for harmonious relationships for the entire group. Although the responses for the value of respect for elders dropped slightly while the value for harmonious relationships had a slight increase when compared with the responses for all participants, the changes are not great. These numbers suggest that male respondents hold the two cultural values in virtually equal esteem. However, the value that received the

highest strongly agree response was the value of respect for elders, which makes it likely the number one value.

The pattern of male response for the values for feast and ritual and value for life is worthy of note. The two had 46.7 percent and 46.6 percent respectively as compared to 54.6 percent each in the general responses. The numbers suggest that the two values, though held in equal regard by male participants, are not cultural values of very high regard. On the value for religion, male response is 60 percent compared 63.7 percent for the general response. The slight difference is also not very important, meaning that male respondents do not endorse the value; rather, male endorsement is a reflection of the general endorsement of the value. Looking at the responses of males to the value for community life (86.7 percent) compared to the general endorsement of the same value (77.3 percent), male participants have appreciable value for community life.

With respect to the value for land, the male response of 80 percent compared favorably with the general score of 81.8 percent. The possible implication of this number is that male respondents have practically the same value for land as the general population in the study. The male response for the value for the sacred (13.4 percent) is a slight increase compared to the general endorsement (9 percent). As much as the male score is not strong enough to suggest that the value is prevalent, it shows that males have a tendency to have regard for the value for the sacred.

Only three cultural values had no opinion scores: the value for religion (20 percent), the value for feasts and ritual (13.3 percent), and the value for land (6.7 percent). Interestingly, all of the three also had no opinion scores on the combined scores where the value for religion had 22.7 percent, the value for feasts and ritual had 9.1

percent, and the value for land had 9.1 percent. Only the value for feasts and ritual had a slight increase of the no opinion rating. The other two values showed that the no opinion scores for male participants is a little lower than the general rating of the same values. Overall, the differences are not important enough to sway the prevalence of the three cultural values.

Table 4.5. Summary of Male Participants' Endorsement of Influence of Cultural Values

African Cultural value	% Frequency of occurrences of male participants				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Value for the sacred	6.7	6.7		73.3	13.3
Value for elders (Older persons)	86.6	6.7			6.7
Value for religion	13.3	46.7	20	20	
Value for feasts and rituals	6.7	40	13.3	26.7	13.3
Value for life	13.3	33.3		33.3	20.1
Value for community life	6.7	80		13.3	
Value for harmonious relationships	53.3	40		6.7	
Value for the weak	60	40			
Value for land	33.3	46.7	6.7	13.3	

Figure 4.5 is a graphic presentation of the sum for agree and strongly agrees responses for the male participants.

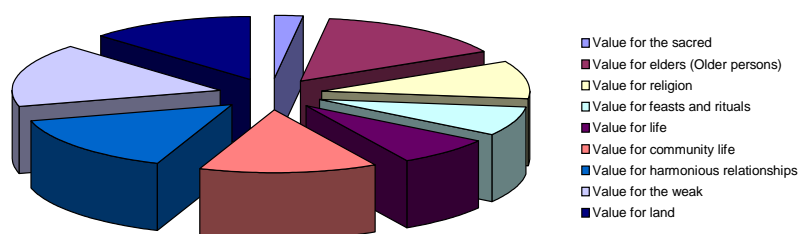


Figure 4.5. Male participants' endorsement of African cultural values (combined a and sa).

The value for the sacred had the highest disagree and strongly disagree ranking (86.6 percent), a number lower than the general ranking of 91 percent. The possible implication of this score was explained earlier. Disagree and strongly disagree scores for the value for feasts and ritual (40 percent) and value for life (53.4 percent) are noteworthy in affecting the prevalence of the two values. The figures compare well with the disagree and strongly disagree ratings of 36.3 percent and 45.4 percent respectively for the values on the general responses. Figure 4.5 shows the disagree and strongly disagree responses of the male participants.

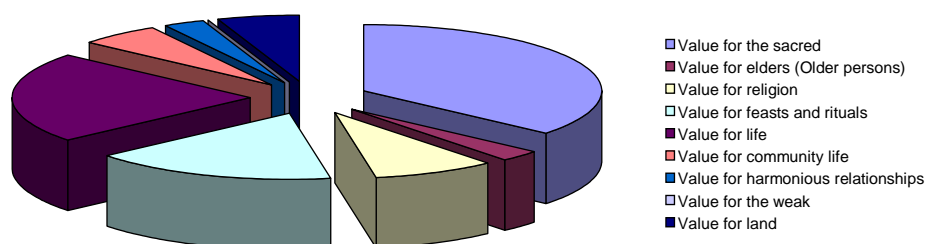


Figure 4.6. Combine disagree and strongly disagree responses of male participants to the influence of African cultural values (combine d and sd).

I also looked for possible patterns in the opinion of male participants only and then compared them with the opinions of the female participants. Table 4.6 presents a comparison of the female and male participants.

Tables 4.6 and 4.7 offer one or two patterns from the male scoring. Male responses show 100 percent and 93.9 percent respectively for the for the weak, sick, and elderly. Second, the value for elders and the value for harmonious relationships each had one disagree or strongly disagree. Third, the value for community life had two disagree, and the value for the sacred had only respondent, M14, strongly agreeing with it. The value for religion had greatest frequency for no opinion with three male respondents making this choice. Participant M3 had the highest number of disagree and strongly disagree scores (six). He also has one on-opinion score. The two values with which he

strongly agreed were the value of respect for elders and the value for the weak, sick, and elderly.⁹

Another point of interest from the male pattern of responses is that all the cultural values except the value for the sacred had at least seven agree or strongly score points out of fifteen possible points. The value for the sacred had one strongly agree point. Each of the cultural values of respect for elders, the value for community life, the value for harmonious relationships, the value for the weak, sick, and elderly, and the value for land had at least twelve agree or strongly agree score points that translate to a minimum of 80 percent for the respective cultural values.

Comparing the pattern for female and male participants, one interesting point of note is that participant F1 has the same opinion with those of participants M1 and M7. The opinion of participant M12 is the same except for his no opinion score for the value for religion.¹⁰ The age profile of M1, M7, and M12 is suggestive of possible generational thinking on the cultural values.

The pattern of female and male opinion for the value for harmonious relationships is the same with only one female and one male marking disagree. Similarly, both the male and female participants have the same pattern of scoring for valuing the weak, sick, and elderly. Females have half the number (six) of males (twelve) who agree or strongly agree on value for land, translating to 85.7 percent and 80 percent respectively, giving

⁹ Participant M3 was 52 years old, has been in leadership for over twenty years, and was a district pastor in his denomination.

¹⁰ Participant F1 was 73 years old, has been in a leadership role for fifteen years, and was the founder of a women's ministry. Participant M1 was 45 years old, has been in leadership for seven years, and was a church planter. Participant M7 was 44 years old, has been in leadership for fifteen years, and was a local church pastor. Participant M12 was 40 years old, has been in leadership for ten years, and was a Bible school provost.

women a slight edge over men in value for land. The value of respect for elders indicate that seven females and fourteen males agree or strongly agree.

The value for community life presents a point of departure between female and male respondents. Three out of the seven female participants disagree with the value for community life as compared to two out of fifteen male participants. Females show that 57.1 percent agree or strongly agree, and males show that 86.7 percent agree or strongly agree for the same value. This number suggests that male participants value community life more than females. The value for the sacred is also worth noting. All the female participants disagree with the value. On the male side, participants M10 and M14 agree and strongly agree with the value. Interestingly, a similarity exist in agree scoring pattern of the two participants (M10 and M14) except on the value for life on which participant M14 disagrees. Participant M10 is the only one who agrees with all the values, and participant M14 is the only one who strongly agrees with value for the sacred¹¹.

¹¹ Participant M14 was 56 years old, has been in leadership for seven years, and was coordinator of rural missions work.

Table 4.6. Comparison of Female and Male Respondents' Likert-Scale Scoring

Respondents Gender & #	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4	Value 5	Value 6	Value 7	Value 8	Value 9
F1	D	SA	SA	SA	A	A	*SA	SA	A
F2	D	A	A	A	SA	SD	SA	*SA	A
F3	D	SA	A	A	A	A	*SA	A	NP
F4	D	*SA	A	A	A	D	A	A	A
F5	D	SA	NP	SD	SD	A	*SA	SA	SA
F6	D	A	A	D	D	D	*SA	A	A
F7	D	SA	NP	*SA	A	A	D	SA	A
M1	SD	SA	A	SA	A	A	*SA	SA	SA
M2	D	A	D	A	A	*A	A	A	A
M3	D	SA	D	SD	SD	D	D	*SA	NP
M4	D	SA	A	NP	SD	SA	*SA	SA	A
M5	D	*SA	SA	D	SA	A	SA	SA	SA
M6	D	SA	NP	NP	D	A	A	A	D
M7	D	SA	A	A	*SA	A	SA	SA	A
M8	D	SA	NP	D	D	D	A	A	A
M9	D	SD	D	D	D	A	*SA	SA	A
M10	A	*SA	A	A	A	A	SA	SA	SA
M11	D	SA	A	D	D	A	A	*SA	SA
M12	D	SA	NP	A	A	A	A	A	*SA
M13	SD	SA	A	SD	SD	A	*SA	SA	A
M14	*SA	SA	SA	A	D	A	A	A	A
M15	D	*SA	A	A	A	A	SA	A	D

Cultural Values: 1.Value for the sacred, 2. Value for elders, 3. Value for religion, 4. Value for feasts and rituals, 5. Value for life, 6. Value for community life, 7. Value for harmonious relationships, 8. Value for the weak, 9. Value for land

* Individual respondent's strongest cultural value

Key to scores: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NP = No opinion, D = Disagree, SD Strongly Disagree

Table 4.7. Comparison of the Summary of Female and Male Participants' Endorsement of Influence of Cultural Values

African Cultural Value	% Frequency of Occurrences of Male and Female Participants									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		No Opinion		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Value for the sacred		6.7		6.7			100	73.3		13.3
Value for elders	71.4	86.6	28.6	6.7						6.7
Value for religion	14.3	13.3	57.1	46.7	28.6	20		20		
Value for feasts and rituals	28.6	6.7	42.8	40		13.3	14.3	26.7	14.3	13.3
Value for life	14.3	13.3	57.1	33.3			14.3	33.3	14.3	20.1
Value for community life		6.7	57.1	80			28.6	13.3	14.3	
Value for harmonious relationships	71.4	53.3	14.3	40			14.3	6.7		
Value for the weak	57.1	60	42.9	40						
Value for land	14.3	33.3	71.4	46.7	14.3	6.7		13.3		

F= Female; M=Male

From the analysis of the data from the Likert instrument, a few facts become apparent. One of the facts is that many of the cultural values listed have the potential to color the approach of African Christian leaders in conflict resolution. However, the potency of the respective cultural values is not the same. Another fact is that when considered as a whole, based on a criterion of a 75 percent prevalency rate, the data shows that five cultural values have the highest potential: the value of respect for elders; the value for community life; the value for harmonious relationships; the value for the weak, sick, and elderly; and, the value for land. Figure 4.7 shows the five prevalent cultural values.

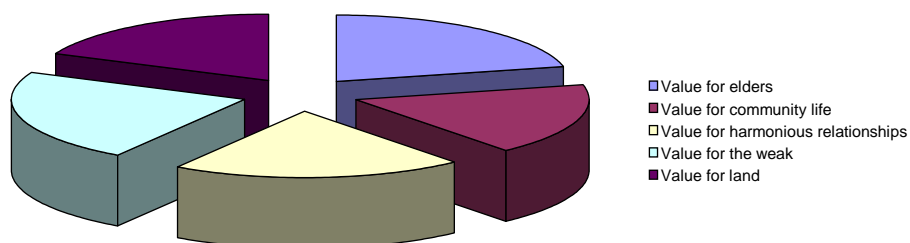


Figure 4.7. Prevalent African cultural values (combined a and sa).

The separate male responses indicate they have the same values as the prevalent cultural values. When considering the responses of female participants separately, the data confirmed four of these prevalent cultural values. The values for community life with a 57.1 percent agree and strongly agree response did not make the criterion for prevalence in the female data. Figure 4.8 shows the prevalent cultural values from the data of female participants.

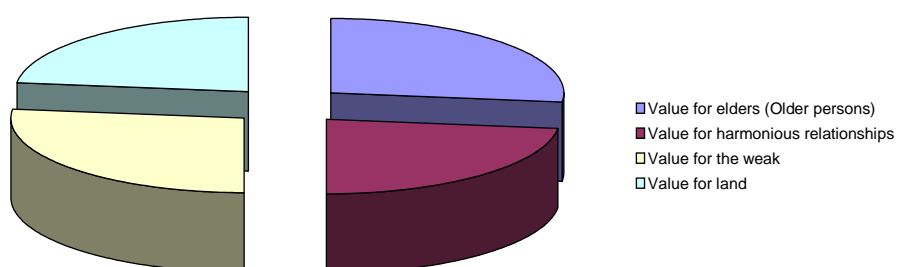


Figure 4.8. Female participants' prevalent African cultural values.

Interestingly, while the prevalent cultural values of female participants did not quite agree with the general prevalent cultural values, that of male participant did agree with the general prevalent cultural values (compare figure 4. 7 with Figure 4.9).

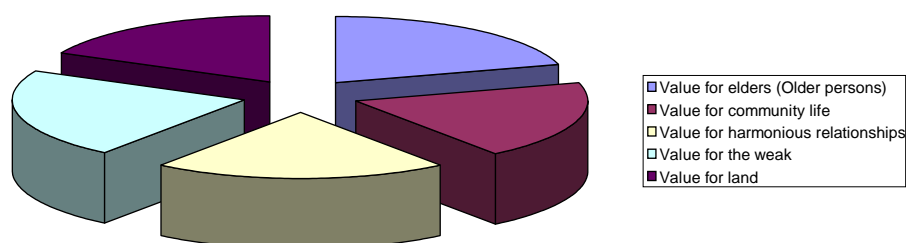


Figure 4. 9. Male participants' prevalent African cultural values.

So far, I have presented and analyzed the data from the first instrument used for this study. The results of the data fitly provide answers to research question #1 of the study that sought to identify African cultural values with the potential to color and interfere with or affect biblical principles in the process of conflict resolution. The values on which both female and male participants agree as having potential to color their approach to conflict resolution were value of respect for elders; value for harmonious relationships; value of concern for the weak, sick, and elderly; and, the value for land. In addition to these, male participants agree that the value for community life also has the potential to color their approach to conflict resolution.

Research Question #2

How do the cultural coloration elements affect the approach of leaders to conflict resolution? The second research question helped discover how the cultural elements identified from the first question color the approach of mediators and interfere with

biblical principles of conflict resolution. The answer to this research question required a description of a phenomenon of which leaders may ordinarily not be aware in the process of conflict resolution. Such descriptions were based on the highest cultural values in the responses.

In order to find answers to the second research question, I interview each respondent on what he or she consider to be his or her most prevalent African cultural value as a Christian leader. The semi-structured protocol interview aimed at discovering how the cultural values in question color the approaches of the respondents to conflict resolution. I used two questions from the interview to answer research question #2. The first question asked how respondents want parties to a conflict to view their approach to conflict resolution in light of their prevalent cultural value. The second question asked how respondents think their prevalent cultural value unconsciously influences the way they resolve conflict. Although the second question directly concerns research question #2, the first question is relevant because how individuals want others to see them has a subtle way of influencing their approach to issues in general, including approach to conflict resolution.

In presenting data relevant to the first question, I showed the feelings of all the participants and how each one of them would want to be seen regardless of whether their respective cultural values meet the criterion used in this project for determining prevalent cultural values or not.

Table 4.8 gives the responses for the question of how respondents want parties to a conflict to view their approaches to conflict resolution in the light of their individual prevalent cultural values. Seven of the respondents responded that they want parties to a

conflict to see them as someone coming to make peace. This number represents 31.8 percent of the respondents. Four respondents (18.2 percent) wanted parties to a conflict to see them as nonpartisan mediators. The same number of respondents (18.2 percent) wanted parties to a conflict to regard their role as trying to foster understanding and consideration of each other's feelings. Three respondents (13.6 percent) wanted parties to a conflict to see their approach to conflict resolution as promoters of amicable resolution. Two respondents (9.1 percent) wanted parties to a conflict to see their approach to conflict resolution as advocating respect for elders. Respondents F2 and M7 each had opinions that stood on their own. Both represent another 9.1 percent.

Three of the seven respondents who wanted others to see them as peacemakers were female. One of those who wanted others to see her as nonpartisan was a female, and only one female wanted to promote understanding. Of the three who desired parties to a conflict to see them as promoting amicable resolution, one was a female respondent. Respondent F4 wanted parties to see her as someone who wants to bring peace without taking sides. One of the things this data suggests is that many of the leaders would prefer to be regarded as peacemakers. About one-third of the respondents (31.8 percent) wanted parties to a conflict to see them as peacemakers. Although not a very high percentage, it is nevertheless the highest figure compared to the figures for other opinions.

Table 4.8. Summary of How Respondents Want Others to View Their Approach to Conflict Resolution

How respondent wants others to see his or her approach to conflict resolution	
F 1	I am not there to find fault with anybody; what am interested in is to make peace.
F 2	I am coming from the aspect of the fact that conflict or no conflict, God can solve it.
F 3	Somebody who really wants us to stay in harmony.
F 4	I want them to see me as a mediator, somebody who wants peace, who wants to bring peace between them, without taking sides.
F 5	As an individual, I stand for the truth even though that truth has to be told with wisdom.
F 6	What you do not want to be done to you, you will not do it to other people, so respect other people's opinion, respect their right to have other things, too.
F 7	I am going there to make peace and all we want is let peace reign.
M 1	As a person who understands them and will do everything to bring peace.
M 2	I am coming to bring in the peace.
M 3	Whatever happens conflict must be resolved at all costs because it is for the benefit of the persons in conflict. No one benefits from conflict.
M 4	I want the parties to see me as nonpartisan.
M 5	I will bring the two of them together to ensure that their family lives in peace as it were.
M 6	I want them to put themselves in another person's position. Again, we should realize that conflicts are not completely destructive; there are lessons to make us move forward.
M 7	Everything that happens has a spiritual root, so I want to get to that root.
M 8	As someone who wants to encourage understanding between the parties.
M 9	Let them know that being in peace with one another is what God wants from both parties.
M 10	If we want things to go right, let's respect age and maturity.
M 11	I want everyone to live amicably and both parties are happy.
M 12	I will like them to see me as someone whose is concerned that everybody should have his own due.
M 13	I want people to see themselves as brothers. So let us maintain community concept.
M 14	My role there actually is not to tell anybody that you are wrong but to use the word of God also to bring them to see where they have both gone wrong.
M 15	I believe that when they have respect for elders, it helps in resolving a conflict.

M (Male respondent), **F** (Female respondent)

The question is how these cultural values color the approach of respondents to conflict resolution even when they do not want parties to a conflict to discern the influence of such cultural values. Tables 4.9 is a summary of how respondents think

cultural value colors their approach to conflict resolution. Eight respondents (36.4 percent) say they are intentional in allowing the influence of cultural values to color their respective process of conflict resolution. Seven respondents (31.8 percent) admitted that in their respective process of conflict resolution cultural coloration takes place unconsciously. In other words, they admit to the phenomenon but are not aware of the point at which it comes into the process of conflict resolution. Three participants (13.6 percent) feel cultural coloration is spontaneous for them. Another three (13.6 percent) took a Christian perspective, so they did not answer the question directly. Respondent M9 (4.6 percent) took a position of Christ against culture even though he also scored the value for harmonious relationships as his prevalent cultural value.

For clarification, cultural coloration is intentional when leaders consciously allow the influence of their prevalent cultural values to come to the fore in their approach to and in the process of conflict resolution. Cultural coloration is unconscious when leaders are not aware that their prevalent cultural values are influencing their approach to and their process of conflict resolution. Cultural coloration is spontaneous when cultural coloration is just a normal part of the approach to and in the process of conflict resolution. In this case, although leaders are aware of the influence of cultural coloration, they find it native or intuitive to their approach and process of conflict resolution.

Table 4.9. Summary of Responses on How Respondents Think Culture Colors Their Approach to Conflict Resolution

Respondent	How Respondent Thinks Culture Colors His or Her Approach
F1	I like to do to others as you want them to do to you, and I try to make other people who are in conflict see the necessity of considering other people.
F2	It has given me contentment in life and make me feel I can never lose by giving the best and all that I have, in order to get people out of their pains, their sicknesses.
F3	I talk with the elderly persons in a respectful manner; the Bible says we should not rebuke elders sharply.
F4	Sometimes unconsciously, I have let go some things I should not have allowed to go like that. When I think of the way and how elders can view them.
F5	I am not aware because before you get to know, it becomes your stuff because that is the way you think and whatever you think, you are made up of that thought and you begin to act it.
F6	It is already built in, so it comes without efforts.
F7	I allow cultural things to take precedence for the sake of peace.
M1	I will look at it in the point that Jesus Christ is a man of peace and then he is my standard; he is peace.
M2	Well, think of driving for example, and you know most of the things with driving is unconscious.
M3	Unconsciously, I tend to err on the side of the weak and elderly. I have found out that there is the degree of bias unconsciously towards the sick and toward the elderly.
M4	You see in the Christian point of view.
M5	It is difficult to divorce the two (Bible and culture), I cannot stop being an African. I have discovered that the issue of respect to me, it helps me to live a better Christian life, and the issue of feeling for the sick for the weak and the old, it helps me to have feelings for other people. It doesn't matter which position I maybe holding.
M6	The elders want respect. Once you accorded that respect, that is the first thing they will do by giving you listening ears. If you desire to achieve success with elders, they have the gun you can't fight them.
M7	My life and approach to conflict is based on this value. Nothing is natural.
M8	Unless I am intentional and conscious about it, I normally would regard the elder as correct. It is normal
M9	Once one is a Christian, culture has to be nailed to the cross. Christian is a Christian. There is no culture apart from the culture of Bible.
M10	We do them unconsciously or unknowingly because we grew up with it.
M11	Over time, I have been saying that if God blesses me, I want to have a home for aged people so that they can take care of them.
M12	Yes, to a large degree, my view on land issues influences the way I see conflict and resolve it. Unconsciously, it may not come out strongly, but it lies beneath, but it's still there.
M13	Yes, as I said, you know the issue of brotherhood is something you want to keep as an African. You want to see your fellow brother as one family, and for that reason, you want to absorb certain things.
M14	Whenever I am in Jos, the way I handle crisis is different from the way I did when I am in the village.
M15	Yes, unconsciously it has become part of me anywhere I go, and then when in a state of conflict I normally bring that as a strategy.

The percentage of those who admit to bringing cultural coloration to bear intentionally on their approach to conflict resolution is close to that of those who bring cultural coloration

to bear unconsciously. The two account for 68.2 percent of the participants. Furthermore, the sum of respondent who acknowledge that culture colors their process of conflict resolution in one way or the other is 81.8 percent of the participants.¹² This very significant percentage can form the basis of drawing a conclusion on the issue of cultural coloration in the process of conflict resolution by African Christian leaders. What the result implies is that cultural coloration can be intentional, unconscious, or spontaneous. From the respective numbers, cultural coloration is intentional than unconscious, and more unconscious than spontaneous. Figure 4.10 illustrates the modes of expression of cultural coloration.¹³

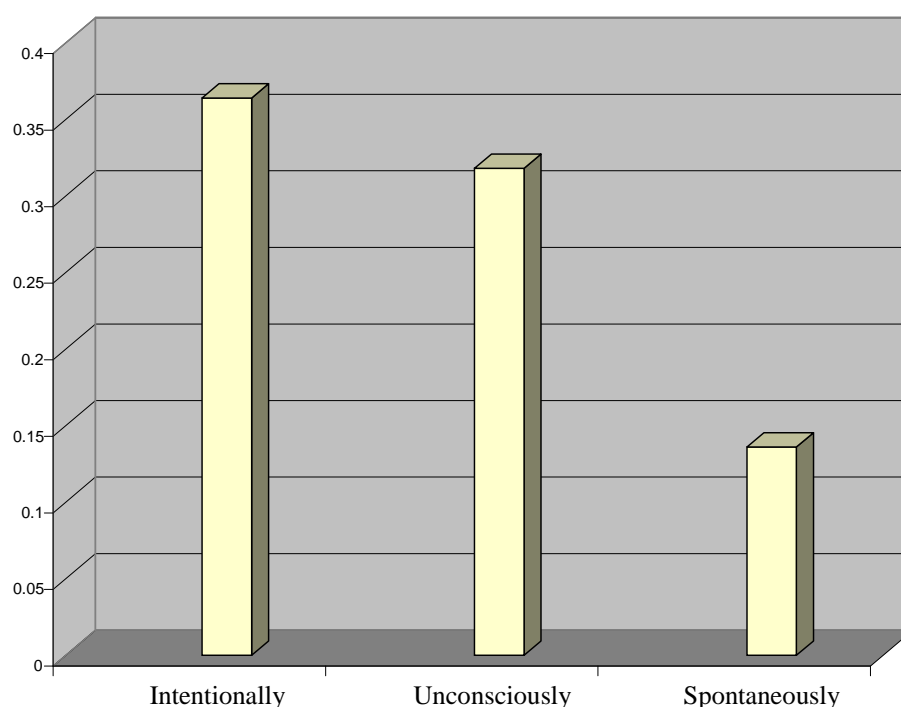


Figure 4.10. Modes of expressions of cultural coloration in the process of conflict resolution.

¹² 36.4 percent (intentional cultural coloration) + 31.8 percent (unconscious cultural coloration) + 13.6 (spontaneous cultural coloration) = 81.8 percent of participants agreeing to cultural coloration in one way or the other.

¹³ In the vertical axis of figure 4.10, each division is equal to 12.5 percent, for example, 0.1= 25 percent, and 0.3=75 percent.

One of the respondent shows intentionality when he said, “Whenever I am in Jos, the way I handle crisis is different from the way I did when I am in the village.” The respondent who said, “My view on land issues influences the way I see conflict and resolve it. Unconsciously, it may not come out strongly, but it lies beneath, but it’s still there,” reflects how cultural coloration takes place unconsciously. An example of spontaneous cultural coloration is a respondent who said, “It is already built in so it comes without efforts.”

Because the study was based on female and male stratum, Table 4.10 compares how female and male leaders want parties to a conflict to view their approaches to conflict resolution. Female participants prefer parties in conflict to see them as coming to promote peace more than male participants. No females preferred promoting the respect for elders in the process of conflict resolution. Another point of interest is that the percentage of females who preferred to spiritualize the approach to conflict resolution is more than twice that of male respondents.

The idea of peacemaking and amicable resolution both have the undertone of harmonious relationships, so by putting the numbers for peacemaking and amicable resolution together (57.1 percent for females and 40 percent for males), the data suggests a very significant preference for the value for harmonious relationships. The 97.1 percent from the sum of the two figures compare favorably with the 90.9 percent sum of agree and strongly agree responses for the value for harmonious relationships (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.10. Comparison of How Female and Male Respondents Want Others to View Their Approach to Conflict Resolution

Preferred perception	Female %	Male %
Peacemaker	42.8	26.7
Nonpartisan	14.3	20.0
Promoting understanding	14.3	20.0
Promoting amicably resolution	14.3	13.3
Spiritual	14.3	6.7
Promoting respect of elders		13.3

Table 4.11 is a comparison of how female and male respondents think cultural coloration takes place when they resolve conflict.

Table 4.11. Comparison of How Female and Male Respondents Think Culture Colors Their Approach to Conflict Resolution

How of Culture Colors Conflict Resolution	Female %	Male %
Intentional	42.9	33.3
Unconscious	28.5	33.3
Spontaneous	14.3	13.3
No coloration	14.3	20.1

Clearly female respondents were intentional in allowing cultural coloration in their approach to conflict resolution when compared to male respondents. The male respondents were unconscious of how cultural coloration takes place when they resolve conflict when compared to female respondents. The percentages of female and male respondents who say cultural coloration for them is spontaneous were virtually equal.

The male response of 33.3 percent for intentional and unconscious cultural coloration suggests a balance and, at the same time, a tension between intentionality and unconsciousness. The man mentioned earlier who handles conflict differently depending on whether he was in the city or in the village probably captures the tension.

Generally, what the data is saying is that the respondents agree that cultural values influence their approaches to conflict resolution; however, many of them do not want parties to a conflict to see them as openly influenced by or openly promoting particular cultural value(s) in the way they approach conflict resolution. Notwithstanding, the desire to live in harmony stand out as important value from the data.

One of my observations as I interviewed the various participants was that cultural value in general did not only appear to define Africanness. It also provided the lenses through which many of the participants see and attempt to resolve conflicts. For example, some of those who did not strongly agree that a particular cultural value influences their general approach to life linked their prevalent value to the value they did not strongly agree on when they talked about resolving conflicts. The following excerpt from one of the interviews illustrates a linking of the value for harmonious relationships to the value of respect for elders in order to explain the former:

Researcher: I observed that of the various African cultural values, the one you agreed with the most is that everything should be done to maintain harmonious relationships with fellow human beings. Could you please describe what this value is to you as an African?

Respondent: Respect for other peoples' values. Especially in Africa, we respect our elders, and if there is respect, then everything will go on harmoniously.

Researcher: In a typical African society, do you think this will still hold?

Respondent: Maybe in the villages it still holds because if you do not respect elders in a typical African society, you will be penalized. You bring either a chicken or a goat. As they will say, it is to appease the gods because you disrespected an elder.

Researcher: But this disrespect for an elder, how does it link with this value for maintaining harmonious relationships?

Respondent: When there is respect, you will not want to go and maybe steal. You will not want to go and fight an elder. You will not want to go and do something that will bring injury or pain to that person.

Researcher: So what does it mean then to you as a value? What does that value mean to you since that is the strongest for you?

Respondent: What it means is that if everything is done in a harmonious way, the world will be a better place for everybody to live in. You will not fear any attack or assault; nobody will come and steal your property.

For this respondent, though the prevalent cultural value is for harmonious relationships, a better way to describe it is to link it with the value of respect for elders. Respect for elders lead to harmonious relationships, which consequently make the world a better place in which everybody can live.

Another observation is in connection to the question of the origin of cultural coloration. The first observable root of cultural coloration from the interview is parental upbringing. The second apparent root of cultural values is parental example. A third possible root of cultural coloration is the modeling of cultural values before and to the children. Biblical reinforcement of African cultural values is an additional possible root of cultural coloration for African Christian leaders.

Concerning biblical reinforcement of African cultural values as a possible root of cultural coloration, a respondent said, “Some element of growing up and some elements of my Christian beliefs, both are not conflicting.” This statement is a good illustration of the point. As long as the Bible does not condemn a cultural value and so long as the

cultural value does not conflict with the clear teachings of the Bible, the cultural value is taken as acceptable for Christians. Especially if a cultural value clearly has biblical support. An example would be the case of respecting elders (1 Pet. 5:5). With such reinforcement from the Bible, African Christian leaders tend to find a scriptural basis for living by African cultural values.

Summary of Major Findings

In this chapter, I presented and analyzed the data of the two instruments used for this study. The following findings are the result of the fieldwork from the project:

- Culture and cultural values color the approach of African Christian leaders to conflict resolution. In other words, cultural coloration is real.
- More than one cultural value influences the general outlook of African Christian leaders to life in general. Not only one cultural value influences the way leaders see life and approach conflict resolution.
- The value of respect for elders, the value for community life, the value for harmonious relationships, the value for the weak, sick, and elderly, and the value for land come out as prevalent cultural values.
- The cultural values endorsed by female participants are virtually the same as those endorsed by male Christian leaders except for the value for community life.
- Christian leaders do not want parties to a conflict to see them as openly influenced by or promoting those cultural values, they endorse in the way they approach conflict resolution.

- The cultural values that tend to come up most prominently in conflict situations include the value for harmonious relationships, which is clearly linked with the value of respect for elders.
- Cultural coloration in the process of conflict resolution can be intentional, spontaneous, or unconscious.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

Conflict is one of the inevitable realities of life. Conflict occurs in homes among family members, among fellow workers in an organization, and among members of the same congregation. The problem is more about resolving the conflict than the conflict itself.

I have watched Christian and non-Christian leaders mediate conflicts, and I have been involved with conflict mediation on several occasions. All the while, I did not know that conflict (especially interpersonal conflict) could be a subject of academic interest until I chose to write a paper on “Christian Leadership and Conflict Management” as part of the admissions requirement for the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary in 2004. In the course of reviewing literature for the paper, I realized that, like many other leaders, I had not paid careful attention to reflecting on what I do when resolving conflicts. I also come to understand that I have to learn about conflict and conflict resolution as I grow in my leadership responsibilities. I consequently began to take more interest in studying conflict and conflict resolution.

The issue that challenged me was finding out what influences the way mediators resolve conflict. The more I studied the subject, the more I realized that culture is one of the key factors that affects the way mediators approach conflict mediation. The quest for discovering how culture influences the approach to conflict resolution led to the subject of this study.

The purpose of this research was to describe the phenomenon of cultural coloration and its influence on African Christian leaders in Jos Nigeria and the resulting impact on conflict resolution. The broader scope of the study included leadership and conflict resolution. The focus, however, was on cultural coloration as an influence that bears on leaders in the process of conflict mediation. The concern is African Christian leaders.

In answering the question of what elements of cultural coloration interfere with or affect biblical principles in the process of conflict resolution from the data collected and analyzed, I want to observe first that the data supports the fact that cultural coloration interferes with the way African Christian leaders approach and resolve conflict. The data also suggests that multiple African cultural values color the way African Christian leaders see life and approach conflict. In one way or the other, each of the African cultural values considered for this study colors the perception of Christian leaders. This idea is evident from the fact that all the cultural values listed had ratings in the strongly agree and agree columns of the survey instrument. However, because the ratings were not all equal, the findings suggest that the importance of the individual cultural values in coloring the approach of Christian leaders is not equal for all the values.

I used the multiple lenses of the literature review and the theological foundation to interpret the qualitative and quantitative data to make sense of the phenomenon of cultural coloration in conflict resolution by African Christian leaders from Jos, Nigeria.

The Reality of Cultural Coloration

Culture and cultural values color the approach of African Christian leaders to conflict resolution as confirmed by the responses of the participants to the Likert-scale

instrument. The fact that all the cultural values listed had agreed and strongly agreed responses gives support to this finding. The cultural value of concern for the weak, sick and elderly had 100 percent agree and strongly agree responses (see Table 4.3, p. 98). It was the only cultural value with which all the respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and the cultural value for the sacred had 9 percent agree and strongly agree responses as the least cultural value with which participants agreed. In addition to affirming that African cultural values are not extinct, the data suggests that all of the cultural values influence African Christian leader to some extent.

Combining the agreed responses to the value for the sacred, the agreed responses to the values for religion, and the value for feasts and rituals respectively raises the question of how the people who agree they are religious and value feasts and rituals largely disagree that everywhere is a sacred place. An explanation for this paradox is the fact that all of the respondents were Christian leaders who would not agree that the shrine for idol worship is sacred. The sanctuary of the worship of Jehovah is the place almost all of these leaders would accept as a sacred place. Therefore, for them, not everywhere can be a sacred place.

The 13.65 percent common to the value for religion, value for feasts and rituals and value for life as strongly agreed values is noteworthy. What this figure suggests is that these values have some degree of influence on the life of the respondents even as Christian leaders. The figure may also be pointing to the tendency for syncretism among African Christian leaders.

As an African man and a Christian leader, and as Magesa (10) noted I want to affirm that this tendency for syncretism is apparent in many area of the African leaders’

lives. For example, when giving a daughter in marriage, commonly, couples first have a traditional marriage at which aspects of cultural requirements and rituals are included before arranging for a church solemnization. Interestingly, parents and church leaders generally see traditional marriage and church solemnization as two necessary parts of the same event and not as two separate events. Some parents and/or couples are not concerned about church solemnization once the cultural aspects are complete. Another area where the tendency for syncretism is apparent and sometimes encouraged by leaders is in the healing for the sick, more especially the use of traditional/herbal medication that may involve rituals and sometimes sacrifice in dealing with terminal ailments or orthopedic remedies. In some cases, traditional/herbal medication is used in addition to Western modern medicine.

The finding that cultural coloration is real corroborates the experience of the early Church in Acts 15 as discussed in Chapter 1 that the core issue of the conflict was about cultural coloration. The cultural value for circumcision colored the perspective of the Judaizers. The finding also agrees with the assertion of LeBaron (“Culture and Conflict”) and Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus that culture and cultural dynamics provide the lenses through which people evaluate what other people do (629). Peoples generally believe that their ways of thinking about and doing things are the best ways. Cultural coloration is real.

A possible implication for recognizing the reality of cultural coloration is that one cannot completely separate the influence of culture and cultural values from the practice of ministry and from conflict resolution. Concerning conflict resolution, mediators have two challenges in view of the reality of cultural coloration. The first challenge for

mediators is to discover the kind (Lowe 10; Leas and Kittlaus 30-34) and phase of conflict (Cormark 35-46) with which they are dealing. Such discovery will help them determine the degree of the interaction of cultural values that are already involved in the conflict situation. Determining these values would help them evaluate the concerns of the parties. The reason is that sometimes what a person is pursuing in a conflict situation may not be his or her real concern. The second challenge for mediators is to do a self-search to determine the combination and interaction of cultural values at play within them as they assess and prepare to resolve the conflict. The greater a mediator's cultural coloration in assessing a conflict situation, the greater the need for intentionality on the mediator's part to help parties reframe (Deutsch 33-36) the conflict and move the discussions towards biblical thinking.

Multiple Cultural Values That Influence African Christian Leaders

The second finding of the study is that no single cultural value influences the way leaders see life and approach conflict. More than one cultural value influences the perception of African Christian leaders about African cultural values and their impact on leaders' approach to life in general and conflict resolution in particular.

The study considered nine African cultural values. Taking into account the endorsement on gender basis, female participants had a minimum of 57.1 percent endorsement on the eight cultural values, and male participants had a minimum of 46.6 percent endorsement on eight of the cultural values and 13.4 percent endorsement on the ninth cultural value (see Tables 4.5 and 4.7, pp. 107 and 113). While these results confirm that multiple cultural values influence an African Christian leader, they also

suggest that the influence of cultural values is higher on women than on men. Overall, the results show that African Christian leaders (male and female) are culturally inclined.

While the parties to a conflict have a mixture of cultural values at work in the way they see their conflict, mediators too have a mixture of cultural values influencing the way they see and approach conflict resolution. As mediators, therefore, leaders should be aware that they might be operating under the influence of mixed cultural values. They need to be careful to be as objective as possible in leading the processes of conflict resolution.

Looking at this finding in the light of biblical precedence, a careful reading of Acts 15 shows that at work in the conflict and conflict resolution processes at the Jerusalem council were more than one cultural value. The two processes in Acts 15 demonstrated at least the cultural value for circumcision, and the value of respect for elders. Commenting on the possibility of having more than one cultural value at work in the processes of conflict and conflict resolution, Augsburgers described them as having confusing and multiple viewpoints (24). According to him, the cues and behaviors from the interaction of multiple cultural values can leave the knowledgeable participant in a culture confused and make outsider to the culture confounded.

Having multiple cultural values at play during conflict resolution is not the issue. The concern is the potential of such interaction to distort thinking and make communication complex during conflict resolution. The situation may be compounded when anger, fright, and other emotional reactions come on the interactions of multiple cultural values. In such situations, people may lose focus of the issues and instead want to win the battle. That was probably why Paul and Barnabas had great disagreement and

argument with the Judaizers (Acts 15:2) before taking the matter to the council at Jerusalem. The dynamics of the interaction of multiple cultural values and emotional reactions can help a mediator to discern when a conflict is moving from a lower-level conflict to a higher-level conflict (Lowe 27). In view of the possibility of distorted thinking (Lowe 27) and complexity in communication created by the multiplicity of cultural coloration, the counsel of Krivis (313) for mediators to look for opportunity to prevent an impasse during the process of mediation becomes relevant.

Five Prevalent Cultural Values

This study focus on how cultural values color the approach of Christian leaders to conflict resolution using a minimum criterion of 75 percent endorsement of a cultural value to determine a value's potential to color the approach of leaders to conflict resolution. The result of the survey showed that five cultural values had the highest endorsement with over 75 percent positive responses. The value of respect for elders had 95.5 percent; the value for community life had 77.3 percent; the value for harmonious relationships had 90.9 percent; the value for the weak, sick, and elderly had 100 percent; and, the value for land had 81.8 percent. These values emerged as prevalent cultural values (see Table 4.3, p. 98).

Female leaders met the criterion for the endorsement of four of the five cultural values except for the value of community life for which female leaders' endorsement rate did not meet the criterion set for this study. Notwithstanding, the result raised the question of why male leaders endorse the value for community life more than females, especially when women might be thought to be more communal in nature. A possible reason for the comparatively low endorse score of female leaders for the value for

community life is the less prominent role women play in the community life of the church in Africa and in a typical African society. Women usually do not hold roles that allow for the demonstration of their ability to *mother* the community. Another likely reason is the pressure of domestic responsibilities placed on women in many societies. In some societies, women are the main source of income for the family, in such cases, they may not have much time for serious community participation. A third possible reason is the higher propensity of women to create conflict among themselves. Women easily find fault with one another openly, and as such find the community life of fellow women difficult to manage not to talk more of the entire community.

Although I did not do a gender specific theological study or review of literature to substantiate what this research revealed about women and community life, I observed that women were not mentioned or heard during the council meeting in Acts 15. The silence of the voice of women at the meeting probably suggests that women did not play open and public role(s) in the community life of the early Church.¹⁴

The result suggests that female leaders embrace the value of respect for elders than male leaders do. The female endorsement of the value of respect for elders may be because culturally, African women grew up with the impression that they were to respect not only elders but men, also. The high endorsement that male participants have for the value of respect for elders (93.3 percent) is suggestive of the fact that an elder is an elder whether male or female. Because elders are regarded as wise, the words of elders are taken seriously even when one does not agree with what they say. Remembering that

¹⁴ I am aware of the debate about women's ordination and the possible exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 but to be drawn into that debate here will overburden this work and distract from the focus of this research. My concern here is to say and talk about what I found from interviewing African Christian leaders.

these (male) leaders though Africans, were Christians, the influence of Christian teaching on them must have been suppressing their tendency to be arrogant. Therefore, for different possible reasons female and male leaders both have respect for elders.

The implication of the way female participants scored on the value of community life in this study indicates that they are not likely to be very good in mediating community-based conflicts.

This finding of respect for elders connects well with the Bible because respect for elders is a strong biblical value. For example, the council that met to resolve the conflict in Acts 15 comprised the apostles and the elders. Peter later referred to himself as an elder (1 Pet. 5:1). The value is also important in culture-based conflict negotiation according to LeBaron, the words of elders are respected when they intervene in a conflict. Therefore, what this study found is not unique to the African context or the population surveyed.

The value of respect for elders has a vital implication for conflict resolution. Both female and male mediators seem to view conflict with the mind-set of how it relates to and affects the value of respect for elders. Unfortunately, this belief gives African Christian leaders the tendency to be biased in favor of elders in the process of conflict resolution.

On the value for harmonious relationships, the closeness of the female (85.7 percent) and male (93.3 percent) endorsement also suggests that both female and male participants generally embraced the value. The reason for the high endorsement score is simply that when people live in harmony, the community can achieve progress faster than when people dwell in conflict. The principle is the same for the family, the church, and

work place. Attaining harmonious relationships seems to be the end objective of conflict resolution. The data is confirming the fact that even when parties to a conflict cease hostility, they cannot make progress together without harmonious relationships. This finding agrees with the conclusion I reached in Chapter 2 that relationship is at the heart of conflict resolution in Africa. The desire for harmonious relationships is rooted in the idea of collective identities of the African people whether they are Christians or not. The general belief is that the people in a community have the same *alajobi* (common ancestral lineage) and should, therefore, live in harmony. Davidheiser notes that by invoking kinship ties the Madinka people strengthen the force of their appeal in conflict resolution (“Special Affinities and Conflict Resolution”). When conflict exists, it affects everyone to some extent (Osamba), so everyone has the responsibility to do all they possibly can do to maintain harmonious relationships.

If the conflict resolution process does not include harmonious relationships, conflict resolution may not be able to guarantee progress, especially if the parties to the conflict necessarily must continue to work together to accomplish common goals. Therefore, ministers and leaders should always do their best to achieve harmonious relationships.

The value of concern for the weak, sick, and elderly is the only cultural value with 100 percent endorsement by both female and male participants. One of the interview respondents aptly captured the possible reason for this general endorsement of the value:

Elderly people and sick people are very vulnerable, in the sense that usually I see that they are more or less at the mercy of the people around them. There is also this sense of dependence such that if they send you on an errand and you do not go they feel like you are taking advantage of the fact that they are old, weak, or sick. I have had the early aspect of my year among sick people and I know how desperate, how dependent, how

sometimes hopeless people can be in such situation. It is such that every offer of help and hope to the sick is always taking beyond the ordinary. It is as you are adding a great value to their life. It is like somebody is just in the ditch and then you are lifting the person up and it is the same even for the elderly person.”

In addition to the sense of vulnerability, dependence, and hopelessness that motivates concern for the weak, sick, and elderly, Africans also believed that whatever is done for people in such state is a seed sown for one's own future.

Concern for the weak is part of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ mentioned in Chapter 1 (Luke 4:18-20). I think that concern for the weak was part of what motivated the response and eventual approach of the Jerusalem council to the resolution of the conflict in Acts 15. Peter clearly challenged the council members to put themselves in the shoes of the Gentiles and not to see only from the perspective of their being the people of God. The earlier conflict in Act 6:1 was apparently due to insufficient sensitivity to the welfare of the weak members of the early Christian community. What this study revealed, therefore, aligns well with biblical precedence.

Ministers and leaders should be conscious of the tendency for mediators to be empathetic toward the elderly, the weak, and the sick in the process of conflict resolution. In this regard, a female respondent said, “It has given me contentment in life and makes me feel I can never lose by giving the best and all that I have so people can come out of their pains and their sicknesses,” and a male respondent said, “Unconsciously I tend to err on the side of the weak and elderly. I have found out that there is the degree of bias unconsciously towards the sick and toward the elderly.” Mediators will need to choose to be clearly objective when resolving a conflict that involves the weak, the sick, or the elderly.

The value for land is also worth nothing. Female leaders had an 85.7 percent endorsement, and male leaders had an 80 percent endorsement. The closeness of the two endorsements is probably an indication that the value for land is a major factor in Africa.

In conflict situations, if land-related issues are involved, then resolution of the issue will likely be difficult. Both female and male mediators indicated attachment to land-related issues; therefore, in conflict circumstances when land is involved, the chances are that the substance of the matter will be clouded with sentiment.

In the attempt to triangulate the findings on each of the cultural value endorsed, I observe that in the Acts 15 experience, the value for religion (the Law of Moses), the value for feast and ritual (circumcision), the value of respect for elders, and the value for community life were mentioned. Of these, only the value of respect for elders and the value for community life were established. Although the gender dimension of endorsement appear silent in Acts 15, from what this study shows, I suspect that it would not be far from what has generally accepted.

The literature review for this study focused on theories of conflict and conflict resolution and, as such, did not attempt gender specifics on the issue of cultural value endorsement. However, in so far as people are people and these theories apply to people, the finding under discussion is valid when placed side by side with expert opinion on the subject of endorsement of cultural values.

Female Endorsement of Cultural Values

The study found that the cultural values endorsed by female participants is virtually the same as those endorsed by male Christian leaders. As previously discussed, the only difference in cultural value endorsement between female and male participants

based on the 75 percent prevalence is the value for community life. The relevance of this finding is in the supposition that as far as cultural values are concerned, African female and male Christian leaders normally think alike. For example, when considered, the differences between female and male endorsement of the four prevalent cultural values is not noteworthy. For the value of respect for elders, the figure for females is higher by 6.7 percent. For the value for harmonious relationships, males had 6.6 percent higher responses than females. On the value for land, female figures had higher responses by 5.7 percent.

One possible reason why male endorsement for the value for harmonious relationships is slightly higher than female endorsement is men's exposure to the complexity of conflict situations and conflict resolution and so would prefer harmonious relationships to conflict situations. Notwithstanding, however, the high endorsement of females for harmonious relationships is indicative of the fact that in conflict situations, women also suffer and, therefore, prefer harmonious relationships.

As discussed earlier, triangulating the female-specific findings of this study either with the theological foundation for the study or with the literature review is difficult. However, my experience of over two decades of leading men and women in a church setting and more than ten years of being on the national advisory board of Women AGLOW Fellowship in Nigeria confirms the female endorsement of African cultural values. My only surprise is that the value for community life did not meet the 75 percent ranking set for this study.

African female Christian leaders are generally capable of resolving conflict as much as African male Christian leaders are because they hold the same cultural and

Christian values with the exception of community-based conflicts where women may feel more comfortable contributing rather than leading the way in resolving such conflicts.

Female leaders should, be trusted with the responsibility of mediating conflict as much as male leaders are.

Cultural Coloration Influence

Another finding from the survey is that Christian leaders do not want parties to a conflict to see them as openly influenced by or openly promoting those cultural values they endorse in the way they approach conflict resolution. As much as the leaders surveyed admitted to the influence of cultural values in their approach to life and conflict resolution, generally they do not want the parties to a conflict to see those influences in the way they approach conflict resolution. Respondents want parties to a conflict to see their approach to conflict resolution as coming to make peace (31.8 percent), as nonpartisan mediators (18.2 percent), as fostering understanding and consideration of each other's feelings (18.2 percent), and as promoters of amicable resolution (13.6 percent). Two respondents (9.1 percent) want parties to a conflict to see their approach to conflict resolution as advocating respect for elders (see Table 4.8, p. 118).

Looking at the various expected perceptions with the aim of integrating them, the majority of the participants wanted parties to a conflict to see them as wanting to promote harmonious relationships and respect for elders because the idea of peacemaking, fostering understanding, and nonpartisan involvement all geared towards encouraging harmonious relationships. Integrating the perceptions this way shows overwhelming desire for the value for harmonious relationships in the process of conflict resolution.

Considering the issue from a female perspective, three of the seven respondents who wanted others to see them as peacemakers were female. One wanted to be seen as nonpartisan while another one wanted to promote understanding. Of the three who desired parties to a conflict to see them as promoting amicable resolution, one was a female respondent. Respondent F4 wanted parties to see her as someone who wanted to bring peace without taking sides.

The leader as mediator should be aware that being completely neutral in terms of avoiding the influence of personal cultural values is very difficult. When the leader as mediator is conscious of this influence, the effects of cultural coloration on her or his approach to resolving the conflict will be reduced.

The finding about value for harmonious relationship is common to both female and male Christian leaders. This idea is considering the fact that female leaders also share in not wanting cultural values that influence them to come to the fore in the process of conflict resolution. The influence of such cultural value is usually beneath the surface of what is being said and what is done in the process of conflict resolution. Even when leaders do not openly admit or even admit at all, cultural values color the approach and process of conflict resolution by African Christian leaders whether they are female or male leaders.

The fact that Christian leaders do not want parties to a conflict to see them as openly influenced by or promoting those cultural values in the way they approach conflict situations is, to a certain extent, evidenced in Acts 15. On the side of the Judaizers, the cultural issue they raised was clothed with theological argument, so what they presented was theological and not cultural. Prominent leaders such as Peter and

James also did not speak as people asserting their position as top leaders whose views others should take as final, yet the house understood their stand on the issues.

Prominent Cultural Coloration

The cultural values, which tend to arise most prominently in conflict situations, include the value for harmonious relationships. This value is clearly linked with the value of respect for elders. A few statements give credence to the conclusion that the value for harmonious relationships tends to be the most prominent cultural value in the process of conflict resolution. Some of the respondents said:

[I want to be seen as] somebody who really wants us to stay in harmony.

What you don't want to be done to you, you will not do it to other people, so respect other people's opinion, respect their right to have other things too.

Whatever happens, conflict must be resolved at all cost because it is for the benefit of the persons in conflict. No one benefit from conflict.

I want people to see themselves as brothers, so let us maintain community concept.

I believe that when they have respect for elders, it helps in resolving a conflict.

Although not all of the statements mentioned the word harmony, in one way or the other, all of them seek to promote harmonious relationships as the goal of conflict resolution.

The respondents probably believed they have a stake in the outcome of the conflict and its resolution. The statements are in line with the ranking for the value on the Likert-scale instrument used for the survey. In the general scores, it was rated 90.9 percent when combining the agree and strongly agree endorsements. On the isolated female scores, the endorsement for harmonious relationships was 85.7 percent, and on the isolated men's

score was 100 percent endorsement. When applied to the theory of conflict mediation, the desire to maintain harmonious relationships would portray the mediator as insider-partial.

The approach of the council at Jerusalem in resolving the conflict recorded in Acts 15 suggests in no small way that the value for harmonious relationships is most prominent in resolving the conflict. As noted earlier in the theological reflection, if the council did not work to maintain harmony of the community, the church would have experienced a breaking away of the Gentiles from that early period. The idea of involving an insider-partial as mediator in conflict resolution restores and maintains harmonious relationships because such mediators are, to some extent, fellow stakeholders in the outcome of the conflict and its resolution (Wehr and Lederach 56; Maiese).

In doing ministry or resolving conflict in the African context, ministers and Christian leaders should work towards fostering harmony while maintaining respect for elders in the process. If ministers and leaders do not work to foster harmony and respect for elders they will discover that the parties will find a way of resolving their differences and begin to see the mediator as the cause of the problem they had.

How Cultural Coloration Takes Place

On the question of how cultural coloration takes place, a careful look at the data shows that cultural coloration in the process of conflict resolution can be intentional, spontaneous, or unconscious.

The data shows that 42.9 percent of females indicated intentional cultural coloration while male participants indicated only 33.3 percent. Responses for unconscious cultural coloration for females were 28.5 percent and for males, 33.3 percent. Spontaneous cultural coloration for females came at a rate of 14.3 percent, but

for male, only 13.3 percent. The combined figures of female and male respondents demonstrate that in the approach to and process of conflict resolution, intentional cultural coloration takes place in 76.2 percent of the cases. Unconscious cultural coloration takes place in 61.8 percent of the cases, and spontaneous cultural coloration takes place in 27.6 percent of the cases.

Although the data suggests that female leaders are intentional more often than male leaders, the overall conclusion is that African Christian leaders are intentional rather than unconscious in allowing African cultural values to color their approach to conflict and to conflict resolution.

This conclusion about intentionality is in agreement with the approach of the council that met in Acts 15 to resolve the culture-colored conflict in the early Church. Similarly, intentionality appears to be behind the various models of conflict mediation as discussed in Chapter 2. For example, the *álájòbí* approach and the approach of the Madinka people of the Gambia both affirm the place of intentionality in the way culture colors the approach of African leaders to conflict resolution (Davidheiser, “Special Affinities and Conflict Resolution”).

On the aspect of unconscious coloration, the findings agree with the observation of LeBaron (“Culture and Conflict”) that cultures unconsciously influence the processes of conflict and conflict resolution. The point of departure with her, however, is that this study discovered that the influence of culture on conflict and conflict resolution can also be intentional and sometimes spontaneous, depending on the issues at stake and who is handling the processes. For example, this study found that when the issues at the heart of

the conflict are connected to aspects of showing respect for elders or for maintaining harmonious relationships the tendency for mediators to be intentional is higher.

The implication of the fact that cultural coloration can be intentional, unconscious, and spontaneous for ministry and for conflict resolution is that the respect for and the influence of certain African cultural values is potent for doing ministry and for conflict resolution in Africa. To be aware of and to do ministry in light of the reality of cultural coloration will enhance the impact of one's ministry and success in conflict resolution.

In summary, the findings of this study confirm the findings of earlier studies (Ho; Davidheiser, "Role of Culture"; Khoo), which conclude that cultural values greatly influence the nature of conflict resolution. Interestingly, though the context and primary focus of each of these studies are not the same, the summary of the conclusion is the same. For example, Kit-Won Ho studied the *Influence of Values on Conflict Management Behavior of Welfare Practitioners*, and the title of Khoo's study is *The Interplay of Culture and Conflict in Work Organizations: An International Study*. Davidheiser studied the Mandinka, Manjago, and Jola and various subsectors of the population of southwestern Gambia, West Africa. The focus of the present study is on the influence of cultural coloration on conflict resolution by African Christian leaders. The conclusions for all the studies are the same that cultural values influence, and (to use my own terminology) colors the processes of conflict resolution.

In conclusion, concerning cultural coloration and conflict resolution, the mediator should try to understand what is more important to the parties involved in the conflict because these foci will determine what each of the parties will be willing to surrender as

his or her contribution to the conflict resolution process. The goal should be prayerfully to use a combination of cultural coloration of shared values and biblical values to bring about restoration of peace, respect, and harmonious relationships. The approach and process of biblical conflict resolution in the face of cultural coloration requires a greater amount of intentionality on the part of the Christian leader. He or she must be intentional in reducing the influence of cultural coloration and at the same time increase the influence of biblical values.

Implications of the Findings

The study establishes that cultural coloration is real and can influence the way mediators approach the process of conflict analysis and conflict resolution. The study provides leaders in general and African Christian leaders in particular with the knowledge of how cultural coloration takes place in the process of conflict resolution. The methodology and instruments used for study will be useful for future studies related to measuring the influence of cultural values in similar or other contexts.

The greatest contribution of the study is the provision of information that will empower Christian leaders in balancing the tension between biblical values and cultural values in their theological reflections and approach to conflict resolution. Such awareness is important in helping Christian leaders and other mediators to approach conflict resolution with a greater sense of intentionality.

With respect to possible areas of further research, future study could explore how the culture of globalization comes into and possibly affects mediators in grappling with the tension between biblical values and cultural values in the process of conflict

resolution. Future researchers could also explore how the expressions of specific cultural values enhance the role of the Christian leader in conflict resolution.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of the study I want to point out is that the average age of the participants was 47.3 years. Although the participants were of proper leadership age, that number did not allow the study to garner the opinion of younger leaders. The findings of the study would probably not be the same if the average age of the participants was 40 years or less because younger leaders are more open to the influence of globalization than older leaders are. Closely related to the issue of age is the level of spiritual training and maturity of the respondents. This factor was not considered in choosing participants, but it likely influenced the rankings.

Another limitation was the number of female participants the stratum method permitted. I think the ranking of female participants on the value for community life might have been higher if the study had used an equal number of female and male participants. If with the present ratio the female participants scored as high as they did, my suspicion is that the female scores would be higher with more female participants.

In responding to research question #2, respondents based their answers on their most prevalent cultural value and not necessarily on all the cultural values that influence their lives. Unfortunately, if a respondent could not or did not explain how his or her prevalent cultural value colors his or her approach to conflict resolution, he or she did not get to explain how any of the other cultural values, which received a score of agree or strongly agree, might color his or her approach to conflict resolution. This flaw was the

result of a problem in the design of the research. I originally envisaged a situation in which each respondent would agree or strongly agree with only one cultural value.

I also want to acknowledge that the work may have benefitted with a more full narrative literature review of the cultural values as they were discussed in Chapter 2.

Unexpected Observations

One of my unexpected observations from the study is the respect some of the participating organizational leaders have for the competence of some of their followers in the area of conflict mediation. I recall a senior pastor who steered me to the wife of another pastor in his church and not to his own wife because he believed the other woman was better at mediating conflict. The experience confirmed to me that though most people can mediate in a conflict situation, not everyone is equally competent or gifted to do so.

An unexpected observation is the root of cultural coloration in general and that or the respect for elders in particular. The root of the value of respect for elders from this research agrees with the apparent root of the value of respect for elders gleaned from Acts 15. The respect for the views of the apostles and elders in Acts 15 is, no doubt, rooted in Judaism, the cultural background of the majority of the member of the early Church. The origin of many of the things that became cultural to the Jews is found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. God specifically instructed that parents should teach and demonstrate vital core values to their children who invariably should teach their own children (Deut. 4: 9-10; 6: 4-9; 11:19-21). Solomon affirmed the potency of this principle in transmitting values to the next generation when he said, “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray” (Prov. 22:6).

Respondents observed that their parents followed this very pattern for them, which they intend to do for their children.

I have observed that transmitting the cultural value of respect for elders is what many African parents do without effort. Like apprenticeship for farming, African children watch their parents respect elders, and they grow to accept this value as a part of their lives. As an African father, I cannot remember sitting my children down to teach them to respect people older than themselves or me. By watching their mother and I model this respect, they also do the same thing. My wife and I have been parents for more than twenty-five years and cannot remember any of our children asking us why they have to respect their elders or people who are older than they are, whether such people are Christians or not.

Recommendations

The result of this study will help leaders in general and Christian leaders in particular, whether such leaders are African or not. The reality of the possibility of cultural coloration in the way leaders perceive and approach conflict resolution makes being intentional in the efforts to be more biblical when leaders face conflict situation imperative. Therefore, I want to recommend the following.

My first recommendation is that individual leaders should remind themselves of the possibility of a bias because of the influence of cultural coloration and hence to make up their minds to make the teachings of the Bible the standard basis for conflict resolution anywhere and at any time. I believe that such self-reminders will help mediators to be watchful when they face conflict situations. The self-reminders would

also prevent the kind of dualistic approach of respondent M14 who acts one way in the city and another when at home.

Leaders who are regularly involved in conflict resolution need to develop their skills in locating possible biblical examples of how similar conflicts to the ones they are facing were resolved in the Bible. They must study the Bible with a focus on how its characters resolved conflicts. Such analysis yields a rich bank of resources from which to draw wisdom and examples of how to approach conflict resolution biblically.

In addition to studying the Bible, leaders should attend training on conflict resolution from time to time. Such training, especially when it comes from a Christian perspective, will sharpen the conflict mediation skill of leaders and keep them up to date with the result of studies such as this one. In addition, training will empower the leaders to apply their awareness of the influence of cultural coloration to different kinds of conflict situations.

Postscript

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that the issue that first challenged my mind was finding out what influences the way mediators resolve conflict. I also mentioned that the more I study the subject, the more I realized that culture is one of the key factors that affects the way mediators perceive and approach conflict mediation. The quest for discovering how culture influences the approach to conflict resolution led to the subject of this study. Now that the work is completed, I want to say that I am glad I undertook the study. For me the study unveiled cultural blind spots in the way I analyze and approach conflict resolution. As I reflect back on the reactions and responses of the interview participants, I still see the way the interview had the same unveiling effect on

many of them. I remember one of the male respondents saying, “This is amazing, I never realized that my approach to conflict resolution is deeply colored by my cultural values.”

Because of what I discovered from the study, I will be more careful not to allow cultural influences to outweigh biblical teaching in all of my theological reflections in general and in my approach to analyzing and resolving conflicts in particular. If contextualization is biblically balanced theology within a cultural milieu, this study without any doubt will continue to influence the way I contextualize my theology.

APPENDIX A

LITIGATION VERSUS ARBITRATION VERSUS MEDIATION

Characteristics	Litigation	Arbitration	Mediation
Decision-making authority	Jurisdiction determined by law	Parties decide to submit their dispute to arbitration (often through contractual arbitration clause)	Parties agree to mediate
	Jurisdiction is determined by the circumstances of the case	Parties choose the seat	Often takes place in neutral territory
	Courts are limited to cases that fall within their jurisdiction	Arbitrators decide on disputes submitted to them	Mediators decide whether or not to take cases submitted to them
	Decisions made by judge or jury	Decisions made by arbitrator(s)	Decision made by parties
	Can be appealed with cause	Rarely can be appealed	Parties can decide not to settle
	Open to the public	Confidential	Confidential
	Adversarial	Adversarial	Cooperative
	Process determined by procedural laws	Flexible process	Flexible process
Procedure of third party involved	Fixed set of procedures	Parties choose the rules of the game	Parties and mediators determine ground rules
	Judges are pre-appointed	Arbitrators are selected by the parties	Parties select a mediator
	Judges often lack technical expertise	Arbitrators are experts on the issues	Mediators are process experts, may or may not be substance experts
	Judges are a disinterested third party	Arbitration panels often include partial as well as nonpartial arbitrators or one nonpartial arbitrator	Mediators can be outsider-neutrals or insider partials. If insider partials, they often work with an outsider-neutral.
Institution	Permanent	Ad-hoc panels	Ad-hoc

Characteristics	Litigation	Arbitration	Mediation
End of process	End determined by procedural requirements	Parties can determine an end date (fast track arbitration)	Ends once cooperative agreement is reached, or parties decide not to settle
	Win-lose solutions	Win-lose solution (unless arbitrator negotiates a win-win outcome)	Win-win solutions
	Established enforcement mechanism	National regulations provide enforcement mechanism	Implementation of agreement depends largely on the parties' goodwill, but the court may enforce in some circumstances
Enforcement	Decision subject to revision (unless decision by the Highest court)	International arbitration often lacks an established enforcement mechanism Award conclusive, final and binding (right of appeal is the exception)	No appeal once settled; other process can be used if no settlement is reached.

Source: Leb.

APPENDIX B

COMPARISON OF THE MODELS OF CONFLICT MEDIATION

Note: These are idealized descriptions. Actual mediators will hold these ideas and follow these actions to lesser or a greater degree.

	Transformative Mediation	Problem-Solving Mediation
Assumptions about conflict	Conflict is an opportunity for moral growth and transformation. Conflict tends to be a long-term process.	Conflict is a problem in need of a solution Conflict is a short-term situation.
Ideal response to conflict	Facilitate parties' empowerment and recognition of others.	Take collaborative steps to solve identified problem, maximize joint gains.
Goal of mediation	Parties' empowerment and recognition of others.	Settlement of the dispute
Mediator role	Secondary: Parties are seen as experts, with motivation and capacity to solve own problems with minimum help. Mediator is responsive to parties.	Mediator is expert, who directs problem-solving process. Mediator directs parties.

	Transformative Mediation	Problem-Solving Mediation
Mediator	<p>Mediator explains concept of mediation but lets parties set goals, direct process, design ground rules. Make it clear settlement is only one of a variety of possible outcomes.</p> <p>Mediator <i>microfocuses</i> on parties' statements, let them frame issues themselves.</p> <p>Mediators allow parties to take discussions where they want them to go: encouraging discussion of all issues that are of importance to the parties, regardless of whether or not they are easily negotiable.</p> <p>Mediators encourage mutual recognition of relational and identity issues as well as needs and interests.</p> <p>Mediators encourage an examination of the past as a way of encouraging recognition of the other.</p> <p>Emotions are seen as an integral part of the conflict process: mediators encourage their expression.</p> <p>Mediators encourage parties' deliberation of situation and analysis of options; parties' design settlement (if any) themselves and are free to pursue other options at any time.</p>	<p>Mediator explains goal is settlement, design process to achieve settlement, sets ground rules. May consult parties about these issues, but mediator takes lead.</p> <p>Mediator <i>categorizes</i> case, frames it for disputants.</p> <p>Mediator direct the discussions, dropping issues which are not amenable to negotiation (for example, relational or identity issues) and focusing on areas <i>ripe</i> for resolution (usually negotiable interests)</p> <p>Mediators discourage discussion of the past, as it tends to lead to blaming behaviors; focus instead is on the present and future—how to solve the current problem.</p> <p>Emotions are seen as extraneous to <i>real issues</i>. Mediators try to avoid parties' emotional statements, or emotions are tightly controlled.</p> <p>Mediators use their knowledge to develop options for settlement; can be quite directive about settlement terms.</p>
Actions		
Mediator focus	<p>Mediators focus on parties' interactions, looking for opportunities for empowerment and/or recognition of the other.</p>	<p>Mediators focus on parties' situation and interests, looking for opportunities for joint gains and mutually-satisfactory agreements.</p>
Use of time	<p>Time is open-ended; parties spend as much time on each activity as they want to. no pre-set <i>stages</i> as in problem-solving mediation</p>	<p>Mediator sets time limits, encourages parties to move on or meet deadlines. Mediator moves parties from <i>stage</i> to <i>stage</i></p>
Mediation: definition of success	<p>Any increase in parties' empowerment and/or recognition of the other—<i>small steps count</i>.</p>	<p>Mutually-agreeable settlement.</p>

Source: Burgess, Glaser, and Yevsyukova.

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



CHAPEL OF MERCY

Last Gate, Dadin-Kowa,
P.O. Box 6545, Jos, Plateau State.

November 6, 2009

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

Introduction of Rev. Isaac Oyebamiji

Greetings in the wonderful name of our Lord and master Jesus Christ.

We write to introduce to you our senior pastor, Rev. Isaac Oyebamiji, who is currently doing a doctoral program in Asbury Theological Seminary at Wilmore, Kentucky, USA.

As part of his study, he is doing research on “The Influence of Cultural Coloration on Conflict Resolution by African Christian Leaders” and is using Christian leaders in Jos as a case study. Through a process of random selection, your church/organization and invariably you as a leader have been selected for interview as part of the study.

While appreciating your cooperation with him, we assure you that the information you will give would be used strictly for the purpose of the study. We also assure you that in the final report, your church/organization and you will be kept anonymous. In addition, we assure you that no personal injury would result to you or your church/organization as a result of the opinion you expressed to him during the interview.

Thanks and God’s blessings.

Yours in His service,

F. I. Mgbogu
For Research Reflection Team

REV. ISAAC O. OYEBAMIJI (Snr, Pastor)

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Dear participant, I will appreciate your reading and endorsing the note below as an indication that you willingly and freely participated in this research.

Thank you.

Isaac Oyebamiji

I am aware that this is a two-part survey, and interview on “The Influence of Cultural Coloration on Conflict Resolution by African Christian Leaders.” By appending my name and signature below, I indicate that I understand the purpose of the research and the ethical condition of confidentiality and anonymity of my person, and the institution I represent in the final report. Consequently as a Christian leader, I voluntarily consent to participate in the survey and interview.

Name:_____ **Signature:**_____ **Date**_____

APPENDIX E

LIKERT SCALE INSTRUMENT FOR DETERMINING PERCEPTION ABOUT AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES

A survey of African cultural values and their impact on worldview

Introductory statement

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find your perception about African cultural values and their impact on your approach to life in general. Please mark **x** to indicate your choice out of the five options provided.

	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel that everywhere is a sacred place.					
I usually have great respect for my elders and those who are older than I am.					
I feel I am very religious.					
I think it is in order to offer to God what belongs to him and to tradition (Caesar) what belongs to it.					
I believe that all of life is sacred since all are linked to the world of the spirits					
I typically consider everyone in my close community to be part of my family.					
I think everything should be done to maintain harmonious relationship with fellow human beings.					
I usually feel for people who are old; weak; and those who are sick.					
I believe everyone should have a piece of his/her own land.					

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.
Isaac Oyebamiji.

APPENDIX F

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR SEMI PROTOCOL INTERVIEW

The following questions seek to discover the influence of ... as an African cultural value in your strategy and approach to conflict resolution. For the purpose of the study, conflict is considered in the broadest sense as the *struggle for supremacy that arises because of differences and interferences in the respective values and goals of people connected relationally leading usually to disharmony, and generally operating at different levels*. You are free to think of any kind of conflict situation as you respond to the questions.

I assure you of the confidentiality of your identity as a participant and that of all the information you shall be giving in response to this recorded interview. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate.

Questions

- Can you describe as an African value?
- What does this value mean to you?
- How do you see conflict in the light ofvalue? For example, how do feel when people are in conflict with each other in the face of this value?
- When you have to mediate a conflict, how do you want the parties to the conflict to view your strategy and why?
- How do you think your value of unconsciously influences the way you resolve conflict?
- What would you change in the way you resolve conflict in the light of this value?
- As an African, and a Christian leader, what do you think you need to know or do in order to be more biblical in your approach to conflict resolution?

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